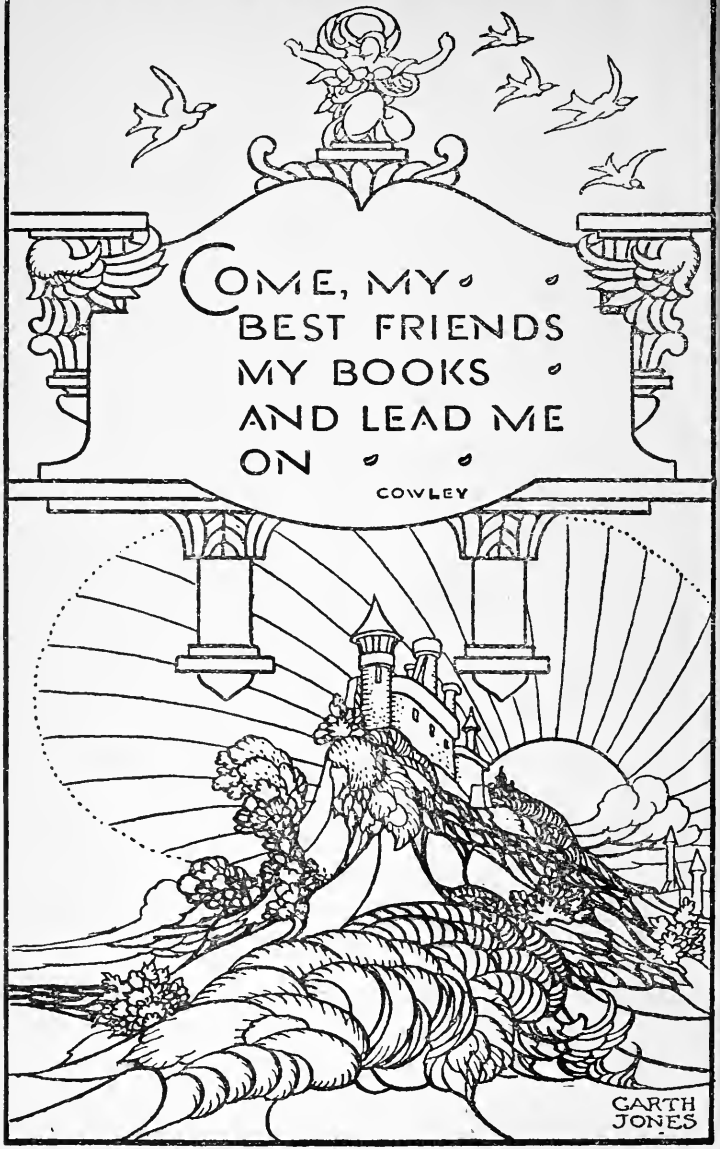

Sermons in stones
and good in everything
GARTH
JONES

LIFE AT THE MERMAID AND OTHER ESSAYS


COME, MY
BEST FRIENDS
MY BOOKS
AND LEAD ME
ON
COWLEY
GARTH
JONES

COLLINS'
KINGS WAY CLASSICS

LIFE AT THE MERMAID

J.C. SQUIRE

COLLINS'
CLEAR-TYPE · PRESS
LONDON GLASGOW

Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

SOME of these essays are new in book form; others, by courtesy of Messrs. Heinemann, are chosen from *Life and Letters*, *Books Reviewed*, and three volumes entitled *Books in General*.

A correct title, therefore, would have been *Selected Essays*. But how dull that sounds. Having toyed with various general abstract titles of the *Reflections*, *Thoughts*, and *Ruminations* type, I fell back on the common resort of poets, and decided to name the book after one of the essays included. *On Being a Jonah* might have been regarded as too bitterly ironical by the publishers who have rashly taken me aboard; there were other objections to other titles; in the end I chose one which seemed to give the most thoroughly misleading impression of the nature and interest of the book.

J. C. S.

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IF ONE WERE DESCENDED FROM SHAKESPEARE

We all have our day-dreams. We lie indolent in chairs, not even doing the very modest things that our intelligence and physique enable us to do, and in reverie perform feats of which we are incapable and enjoy successes which we shall never earn. We rescue the perishing, sway multitudes, win victories by sudden strokes, make orations surpassing the finest efforts of Demosthenes, and erect in a week houses which the Ministry of Health would consider the work of ten laborious years. My own favourite foible is hitting sixes out of Lords, cricket being a game at which no amount of practice and coaching could have made me anything but a complete duffer. There are no doubt those (possibly cricketers) who day-dream of success as authors, setting all England agog with epics or selling hundreds of thousands of copies of a six-shilling novel. That sort of dream would never sufficiently distract me to take my eye off my tray-full of pots, perhaps because it has some sort of relation to qualities I actually possess; I could get no sort of thrill out of any triumph in literature comparable to the delight of striding to an applauding pavilion after that hurricane century which saved the side.

But apart from these dreams of things which we do in our own proper selves, and which would be quite open to us if we were really competent to do them, there are the dreams which postulate a change beyond our contriving in external conditions. "If I were King" is a traditional phrase for a dream probably universal. There is no private citizen in the world who, were he one morning set upon the

throne, would not show these professional monarchs their business. Conceive what could be done in that position, both directly and by force of virtuous example: but, of course, you know as well as I do. I will admit to this dream. I have imagined accident, not the force of my nature, placing me on the most ancient thrones of Europe; and I fondly persuade myself that I know what I should do if I got there, as also I know what I should do if (a consummation I wish far more devoutly) a millionaire with a penetration and a sense of justice and propriety more than ordinary suddenly gave me an enormous sum of money. There are no desirable and not many undesirable situations in which I have not imagined myself; there are few sorts of accidents, pleasant or other, with which I have not dallied, and of which I have not endeavoured to surmise the effects. But once I was presented, gratis, by another person with a day-dream of a sort new to me; and I don't know whether it is a pleasant one or not.

It was one of those ingenious dogs, one's correspondents: the people who have so little honest work to do in the world that they can afford to track down one's smallest errors and, when the possibilities of this base pastime have been temporarily exhausted, employ themselves in constructing problems sometimes ingenious but never useful. "What would you do," is the question, "if you came upon proof, absolutely irrefragable (a good word that), that you, a writer yourself, were a lineal descendant in the male line of William Shakespeare? Would you divulge?"

Divulge! Why not? What fun it would be! Besides, with that behind me, the community would never allow me to starve, a certainty that would be very agreeable, however it was obtained. One lecture-tour in America, or even in England, with those mighty credentials behind me, and I should have a bank-balance built upon the rock. Think of the prices—

especially if I dropped the family name and appeared as John Shakespeare — that my critical pronouncements would command, especially if I took the obvious course and set up for an expert on the drama. "Mr. Granville-Barker may say what he likes about the apron stage, but there is a tradition in my family which . . ."; "Nobody who bears, as I have the honour to bear, the dramatist's name would consider for an instant the idiotic suggestion that Hamlet was mad." "Mr. Gubb says that Shakespeare was a drunken, illiterate clown; if he really wishes to begin bandying words about ancestors I shall presently unloose my tongue." Weight would be lent to anything I said; the subtle influence would pervade even those opponents who considered themselves immune from it. All these patent advantages appeared at once to me. But when my fancy really got working, when I began to conceive the thing as really happening, I discovered that there would be drawbacks, too.

The announcement would, no doubt, make a prodigious sensation. But would it not be seen mainly in a comic light? The first fine glow would be a little chilled by those parallel portraits in the newspapers with the captions (beginning "Look on this picture and on this") calling attention to the shrinkage of the Shakespeare forehead. One would have lustre of a sort, but it would be a comic lustre. No imaginary debate in *Punch*—those debates in which Sir Hall Caine and Sir James Crichton-Browne take part—would be complete without the younger Shakespeare, and if one ventured, as one obstinately would, to continue producing attempts at what is called "creative work" the guffaws, on each occasion, would be general and loud. You can conceive those comments: "On the whole we still prefer *King Lear*"; "Not up to the standard of the Old 'Un yet, Mr. Shakespeare"; "The Cygnet of Avon is at present a

somewhat callow and ungainly bird"; "Not marble nor the gilded monuments of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme—we don't think!" The production of a new play, if any such there were, would bring this unseemly jesting to a climax; a thousand doltish chuckling voices would inform me that my progenitor's position was still secure. And what compensations, beyond the pleasure of the first dramatic disclosure, and the comfort of the adventitious dollars that could certainly be gathered in a hundred ways, would there be for all this humiliation?

I think, none. After the first excitement, the first fevered chase had finished, one would be little more than a stock and slightly stale joke. One would be revered by very simple and humourless folk. There would be unpretentious drawing-rooms where they would be proud to see one and fluttered to defer to one's authority on Elizabethan literature. The Shakespeare Society of Skegness-on-Sea would solicit, and could not be refused, the privilege of putting one's name among those of the patrons or hon. presidents at the top of its official notepaper. The eyes of unsophisticated illiterate men in the shires would light up if they were invited to play a round of golf with one; they would remember it and the recollection would be treasured in their families. One would be requested to make a little speech at the opening of the Shakespeare Festival at the Theatre Royal, Bexhill. A platform seat would always be provided at Shakespeare and National Theatre festivals in London; some fairly conspicuous rôle might be allowed at the annual junketings in Stratford. But mostly life would be a round of suburban bazaars, small prizegivings, and competitions in the recital of dramatic poetry. So life would wear on, and as it wore on one's expression would grow either more and more smug or more and more harassed—I think the latter. And every morning one would—that is to say, I should—gaze in the mirror

with haunting fear. The depraved impulse to grow a moustache and a little pointed beard I think I could control; in any event one could never, even if one wished to succumb to that mania, hope to look as much like Shakespeare, Senr., as Sir Hall Caine does. But no power of self-control, no (as I believe) barber's medicaments, not poppy, nor mandragora, nor hair-massage can arrest that baldness which begins on the top of the head and spreads doggedly downwards on each side. When that began I should feel that the cup of my bitterness was full: I should not know whether to put up with it or to buy a wig, the motive of which might be instantly, shamefully, detected by the Press.

So I think if I discovered those irrefragable proofs I should, for fear of consequences, suppress them. They could only be made innocuous if one discovered simultaneously proofs, equally conclusive, that Shakespeare did not write his plays but was merely an obliging, or a rapacious, soul who lent his surname to Bacon or another.

ONE

LOVELY and pleasant it is to have lynxes for readers. A little while ago I referred to a verbal solecism of which the authors of the *King's English*—the most salutary and diverting of all works on composition—would not allow the use. A reader, whose title to speak is fully equal to that of those authors, at once wrote to say that I need not think that I avoided ugly and indefensible English altogether. I am, he says, deep-sunk in one vice which would certainly have been denounced by the authors of the *King's English* had it been as prevalent when they wrote as it is now. This is the habit of using "One" in contexts where it cannot pretend to represent anything but "I" or "me." He appends illustrative extracts: Four from Oneself, one from Mr. P. F. Warner, one from the Bishop of the Falkland Islands, and three from persons unknown—one of whom writes: "But I have known in the small circle of one's personal friends quite a number of Jews who . . ." Guilty!

The letter found one in a state in which one's defences are at their weakest. One was (and is) in bed with this loathly influenza, which has just shown its lack of discrimination elsewhere by killing the harmless Sultan of Turkey and sparing the Kaiser. One's head aches. One's spine aches. One's hip-bones and shoulder-blades ache and protrude. Countless little sharp coughs harry one's outworn stomach. One's throat is a dry stove-pipe. One's brows are tight and one's eyelids heavy with the pressure of one's hot blood. One has no taste for tobacco; one cannot talk, work, think, or drink. All one can do is to shut

one's eyes until one is bored with that, and then read until one is exhausted by that.

I, I, I, I, I have, therefore, taken that course. My reading, as always in these circumstances, has been the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy; when I am very ill indeed I think there may be something in it. For two days I went from volume to volume, and at last I reached Sir Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare.* This is, as is generally admitted, a prodigiously informative book, though its title might more accurately have been *The Probable Life of Shakespeare.*

The perhapses drape the book in festoons right up to the hypothetical last malady which Sir Sidney introduces in these touching words:

> "The cause of Shakespeare's death is undetermined. Chapel Lane, which ran beside his house, was known as a noisome resort of straying pigs; and the insanitary atmosphere is likely to have prejudiced the failing health of a neighbouring resident."

But it is a great book. It is an encyclopaedia; its compiler has written with great learning, judgment, and fairness of mind; it is not likely to be superseded unless the Baconians suddenly prove their case. But (I observed on my couch) Sir Sidney has his defects as a writer. His ordinary style, compressed and clear, is wonderfully suited to the narration of dry facts. But when he feels he must be picturesque for a line or two, especially when he is attempting a little of that "merely aesthetic criticism" which he eschews in his preface, he is apt to be awkward with his imagery. Especially, he juxtaposes incongruous metaphors which, although moribund, are not quite dead enough to be put together unnoticed. When he writes of "all the features of a full-fledged tragi-comedy," one [I] cannot help wondering whether

"features" was a misprint for "feathers." I was wondering how it was that so sensible and unrhetorical a man as Sir Sidney had left these sentences in this book after so many editions, when the letter arrived informing me, in the pleasantest way, that I had a beam in my own eye.

But, to continue our metaphors, my withers are unwrung by that beam. I know that I write "one" when "one" does not mean "we" or "everybody," or "any sort of person," but "I," or "me," and nothing else. One does not think one uses "I" and "one" in a single sentence; beyond that one is quite unscrupulous. One will say, for instance, "One opened this book with pleasure," which means, and can only mean, "*I* opened this book . . ." It is, from my critic's point of view, indefensible and inexplicable. Why do I do it? Or, rather, why do *we* do it?—for I am speaking now, not only for myself but for Mr. Pelham Warner and the Bishop of the Falkland Islands. The answer is simple. Reader, one is modest; bashful.

I—for here I will force myself boldly into the first personal pronoun—do not like seeing a page of print covered all over with I's. Those I's are so bold, so brazen; they stand up so, they are so tall. Often and often I suppress an "I" as I write, substituting the meaningless, but oh so comfortable and pseudonymous-looking "One." Sometimes, owing to long custom, the operation is performed unconsciously. And often it is done deliberately after I have written. The proofs come back to one—here I am, lapsing again—and one is struck by the ubiquity of those little staring marks of egoism. Panic seizes one. "One" offers cover, and one takes it.

There is a negative advantage; one would be a hypocrite if I were to pretend that one finds in the practice no positive advantage for myself. If a critic writes, "I admit that I did not approach this

biography with a favourable bias, but it was worse than I expected," he is liable to an uneasy feeling when he reads his own words. All these people, he will reflect, may say to themselves, "What the devil are your biases to do with us, and as for your opinion, it is only your opinion." But knock out the first person and put "one"; and forthwith the whole statement seems to acquire the mysterious backing of all mankind. The critic's judgment looks like the inevitable judgment that any sane man was bound to form, that masses of men have simultaneously formed; there is weight, authority, behind it, something of the weight and authority of the royal, papal, or editorial "we."

That is not a defence; it is an explanation and a very discreditable admission. I admit that no really courageous or honest man (always excepting Mr. Pelham Warner and the Bishop of the Falkland Islands) would employ so ungainly a device to secure such dubious ends. As I have now confessed, I suppose that it would be futile to try it in these papers any more; my unobtrusiveness will no longer deceive. But if, in the future, it should be found that my works are covered with what I have heard another shy writer describe as "these horrible, little telegraph-poles," do not blame me. The responsibility for the change, I hope I have made clear, rests elsewhere.

INITIALS

WHENEVER a journalist wants to write something, and lacks a peg, he invents a correspondent who (he states) "writes to" ask, point out, confirm, contradict, qualify, complain about, suggest, or urge something or other. I have done it myself. On this occasion, however, the correspondent is a real one. He is real, and I have very great respect for him, although I have never seen him. And although the question he asks, the fact he points out, the practice he complains about, and the changes he suggests or urges, have in the first instance a purely personal relation to myself, I feel justified in mentioning it because it opens up larger issues.

The correspondent says, in his mild and diffident way, "Why the —— do you sign your articles with initials?" Initials, he argues, do not "get over the footlights"; they do not suggest a personality; they are not rememberable. "Surely your initials *stand for* something. They did not christen you with initials. What does this 'J' represent?" A part of this contention I will admit frankly and without hesitation. The custom of christening people with initials—although, I believe, long prevalent in the United States, where X, Q, P, and Z commonly do duty for a second name—has never caught hold in this country. "J" does stand for something. What is it?

Well, it may be Jabez. It may be Joseph, James, Jonah, Jeremiah, Josiah, Jehu, Jeroboam, Jedediah, Jasper, Joshua, Jenkin, Joab, Jehoianim, Jehoahash, Jehosophat, or Jerubbabel. If it were Jerubbabel, I cannot deny that "Jerubbabel C. Squire" would

"get over the footlights." It would be remembered by every man who had seen it, even casually on a bookstall, for one second; it might even hoist me into universal fame. On the other hand, if it *were* Jerubbabel, my motives for suppressing it would be obvious, and even universal fame and an enormous fortune may be purchased too dearly. But before we investigate its actual nature further, let us examine more closely this gentleman's general contentions.

That you do get used to a name is certainly true, and the familiar name is as much part of an author's "publicity outfit" as is the trade name of a brand of sardines or stove-polish. A new play by Geo. B. Shaw would take some time fighting its way unless there were elaborate explanations (which there certainly would be if the change were made) by Mr. Bernard Shaw that this was his new style of address. "G. Keith Chesterton" might stand a chance; the author's surname is long and uncommon. But H. George Wells or Herbert G. Wells would be asking for neglect, and the name of Sir Thos. Caine on a new novel would be greeted by the public with stares of apathetic noncomprehension. But let it be observed that there is almost every sort of variety in the signatures by which these eminent men have already become known. Mr. Shaw customarily writes both his Christian names in full, or begins with an initial and writes the second name at length. Sir Hall Caine suppresses his first name and displays his second. And the other two confine themselves to initials. Yet I do not think it can fairly be said that Mr. Chesterton is obscure behind the "G. K." or that Mr. Wells has hid his light under bushels of "H. Gs."

I think the truth of it is that initials stick just as well as names, but they take longer to stick. They take longer to stick because they have no intrinsic interest. They have no flavour. There are exceptions. Mr. Chesterton has turned the series "G. K. C."

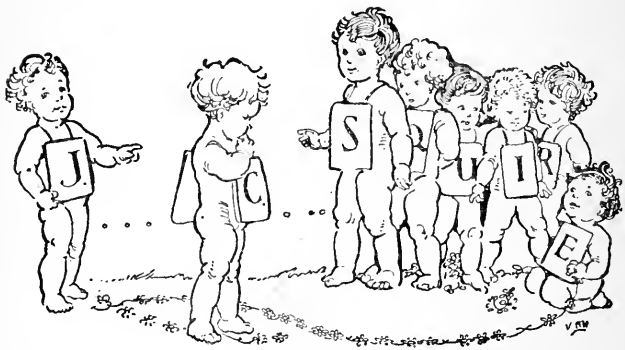
into a kind of word, with a tone of its own like any other word; and if an author arose who signed his name "G. K. Chatterton" or "G. K. Chipps," we should have prepossessions about him, expect certain things from him, and retain a memory of him if only with the result of confusing him with his initial-sake. Again, there *are* series of initials which have a wholly accidental individuality which makes them fix themselves at once. If a man's initials are "P. I. G." or "F. O. O. L." we neither forget it nor allow him to forget it; if the name at the head of this composition were "A. S. Squire," I think it would get over the footlights all right. Its bray would be ringing in the reader's ears long after he had laid down the paper. But leaving exceptional cases out of account, initials, becoming pseudo-words by familiarity, differ among themselves in value and beauty just as words do. A mass of associations cling around them, and they have sound-sequences which affect us (we unconscious) just as the vowels and consonants in ordinary words do. Without knowing it, we probably dislike innocent initials which have been borne by people whom we have detested; without knowing it, we are enchanted with certain initials because they come trailing clouds of glory from the past or because they have a pleasant rippling sound. Here we get on to the influence of sounds. It is a difficult matter. All we can say is that *other things being equal* some words are more beautiful than others: all writers know this. But it is equally true that sound will not go all the way: that good associations may make ugly syllables seem beautiful and bad ones may make beautiful open vowels sound ugly. It is hard to detach the word from the object. We have only to look at the word "Keats" to realise how horrible we should think it had Keats been a vulgar writer; and even the word "moon" would seem ugly if it connoted something red and writhing in the entrails of a fish. You may test the

truth of this by experimenting with a word which can be used in two very different senses. Such a word is "lights." To my ear it is not a pleasant-sounding word, merely as a word. But it can seem one thing and the other. Think of it in connection with all the beautiful lights in the world—the stars, candles in a great old chamber, the lights of a city seen from a dark distance, the lights of cottages in a forest, or of dawn over the sea—and it seems a lovely, soft, lingering word fit to be rhymed (as it always is) with "nights." Think of it as the name of those vague atrocities which are hawked in mean streets as "cats-meat," and it becomes a vile spluttering word fit only for that base use. But I wander.

So let us return whence we started. There was one name that I omitted from that engaging list of designations beginning "J." There are no doubt others; but I haven't my Old Testament with me. The name I refer to is John. It has been borne by many illustrious men and an innumerable multitude of the obscure. It was made glorious by John Milton, John Keats, John Donne, John Ford; and at various times it has renewed its lustre in John Ketch, King John, twenty-two Pope Johns, John Galsworthy, John Masefield, John Peel, John Corlett, John Smith, John Jones, John Robinson, and John Barleycorn. There was also Friar John, Brother John of the Funnels, doughtiest, thirstiest, and, very likely, most learned of all. There is no name like it. Fashions in other names come and go. Thomas and William slump and boom. Geralds, Lucians, Marmadukes, Susans, Peggys, Margarets, Marjories, are the rage of a generation, and then become sickening to the palate. A countess digs up the name Gladys for her daughter; in ten years it covers the country; in another fifty it sinks into disrepute; and then it goes on flourishing in dark byways until some new explorer produces it once more as a fresh and radiant thing. But John

goes on. From the ages when it was spelt Jehan to the present day the proportion of Johns to the total population has probably never fluctuated beyond one or two per cent. It is as fixed as the English landscape and the procession of the seasons. And, like sun, moon, and stars, roses and oaks, the yearly renewing miracle of the woods and the cornfields, it never becomes wearisome or tarnished. Time does not make stale its infinite sameness; the most fickle slaves in Fashion's retinue cannot contract a positive distaste for it; in its dignity, solidity, greenness, and grave mystery, it defies the weakness of those who tire of all things. Nothing affects it; nothing can bring it into contempt; it stands like a rock amid the turbulent waves of human history, as fine and noble a thing now as it was when it first took shape on human lips. It is a name to live up to; but if one who bears it sinks into disrepute it falls not with him, but rather stays in the firmament above him, shining down upon him like a reproachful star.

But I do not see why I should say what my own name is if I don't want to.



A SUBJECT

GOING into the country for a week-end (without the least intention of beginning this page bestially with a participle), I found that I had left at home the book which I had intended to review. Had it been a book of argument, that need not have been much of a difficulty; for I could have mentioned the book's name and then argued with and about everybody else who had ever dealt with the matter under consideration. But it was a collection of letters, and you cannot review a collection of letters without quoting from them, or, at least, reading them: that is, unless you are cleverer than I am or more impudent than I dare to be. The result was that I found myself with "nothing to write about."

The situation must be a familiar one to every routine writer; and I conceive that all men meet it in the same way. They wish that they had gone to the Straits Settlements to plant rubber at Kuala Lumpur or some other place; or that they had become doctors or professional soldiers; or that they had gone into the Civil Service, or that they had jumped at that opening on the Stock Exchange. They madden those around them with their querulous complaints, beneath which there seems to be an implication that it is a monstrous injustice that a subject has not been provided by family, or friends, or rained down from heaven by Providence. They sit down, get up, walk about, pull their hair, pick up papers and look at them, open books and begin to read, though they know time presses, smoke pipes and cigarettes alternately, spill ashes, talk jerkily to dogs and cats, wish they were rich, write headlines in a fair, round hand, draw faces, and put down words like "The," "Everybody"

(and "Going"), in the hope that they will start trains of thought, or, at any rate, trains of words, which are the next best thing. The clock ticks on as remorselessly as it did to Faustus; the time of train or post approaches; the game seems up; suicide presents itself as a remedy for life's ills; reason interposes that the worst troubles can be survived; and in the end something happens. As a fact, no editor ever gets letters from regular essayists saying, "Excuse me this week, I have no ideas." The pressure of necessity forces the door and something rushes in.

So it was with what I have been warned not to call "oneself." I had told myself twenty times that I had nothing to write about; I had ransacked my memory in vain for fragments of some recent intelligent conversation which might have raised some literary problem of interest; I had searched several papers and many shelves for something which might appear capable of exposition or dispute; I had finally sat down in a sulk; and then an Inner Voice repeated "nothing to write about" in tones of contempt. Justly; for what nonsense it was! To begin with, there is "Nothing" itself, a subject which has not been exhausted, though it has been glorified by a dead poet and a living essayist. And, apart from nothing, there is anything and everything else, including (as was long ago observed) a broomstick. A change came over my brain, and I felt suddenly as though I could write, with equal fecundity, on anything in the world. My mind, my body, the room, the landscape, the sky, the universe instantaneously became crowded with subjects all clamouring to be investigated.

That is what is known as the awakening of the imagination, a process that may take place in all sorts of ways: that may be brought about by a word, a sound, a scent, a drink. The world, that seemed a collection of lifeless matter, is suddenly invested with wonder; all things spring to life and are clothed with

infinite associations; every object recovers its history and its mystery—which is history undisclosed. Every shape and colour acquires interest, every aspect of every object asks questions. Here, at this moment, I look at my hand, my moving hand. I see it as the slave of will, the prodigious garment of soul; as a concourse of chemicals drawn together by unimaginable forces; as the heir of innumerable ancestors, paws and claws and tendrils. I pore over the elevations and depressions, the nails and the little hairs, the pits whence the little hairs grow, the ribs and wrinkles of the skin, never the same on any two human hands. I think of chiromancy, and wonder how began the human belief that a man's fate was written on his hands; who it was named those thin, pink streaks and girdles by the names of Life and Venus and Mars; and why so remarkable a doctrine should have started if there was no truth in it. How interesting it would be to pursue that speculation, to meditate on it and to examine the reflections of other men on it, of the ancients, of Paracelsus perhaps, of modern doctors. The mind travels to Bertillon and Scotland Yard; to finger-prints on windows and woodwork; to greasy and bloody finger-prints; to counter-detective work; to gloves. At that word gloves, all the gloves in the world soar into sight: velvet gloves, the gauntlet of the King's champion, the glove that the heartless French lady flung among the lions for the *seigneur* to pick up, gloves to which men have written songs, gloves of an ancient fashion kept in lavender with faded letters. And, returning, I think of metaphorical hands, of the hands of fate and the hands of destiny; of symbolical hands, of clouds no bigger than a man's hand, of finger-posts and pointers; of sculptured hands, the giant hand of Rodin; of real hands, hands long dust, Queen Mary's, and Alexander's that curbed Bucephalus; of Lady Macbeth's little hand from which no waters could wash the stain, of the white hands of

Iseult of Brittany, and the pale hands that the ghosts stretched out across Acheron.

How easy it would be to write a large book about hands; how impossible to exhaust their beauties and their strangenesses, their diversity and multitude of their works! But why linger on the hand? There is the pen also. It is a fountain-pen, and has to be dipped continually in an inkpot; but, though degenerate as an individual, it is a scion of a wonderful race. Its very name is history in a crystal, and memorises the wing of the goose with strong quills. Steel pens and gold pens, now dominant, are but newcomers; the stylus had a longer and wider reign; there is also the brush, which the Chinese—whose ink the French call *chinois* and we Indian—prefer; there are also fingers, which, used by prisoners and dying travellers for writing messages in their own blood, have established a peculiarly intimate link between the hand and the pen. Then, the characters of pens, their racial peculiarities and habits; the broad pens, the fine pens, the new pen that refuses to take ink, the old one that is encrusted; the wilfulness of the pen that crosses; the mania of pens for the collection of hairs; the difficulties of removing such hairs; smudges; blots; the problem of what size blot really matters, and when. Here, in looking at the operation of writing, we come upon a large area of human life and activity; yet who has explored it and analysed its content? One thinks into it like a man digging in a cave; the more one discovers the larger the surface exposed to research.

I come to the ink. How is it made? I don't know; if I looked it up in the encyclopædia, I should find a whole article about that. I fancy that gall and lamp-black come in. What is gall? What things have been done with ink! How much ink has been shed by journalists in noble causes! How pathetic is the yellowness of old ink! How true is

that observation of the anonymous Caroline that we should have very little to drink if all the sea were ink. A great vista opens up from ink.

The pen, the ink, the table-cloth (black and white check); paper; a blue bowl full of oddments; a window; brick chimneys; bare elms; a mottled sky. Below, a garden and plants in winter sleep; a pond where fat goldfish used to be, and probably still are, waving to and fro with gaping and closing mouths, amid a green growth, hiding under flat leaves, diving out of sight, rising bright to the surface. Fields, farms, churches, trains, towns, London, the sea. Each word is the head of a comet with an infinite tail of coloured light. I am humiliated at the variety and splendour of things and ashamed of my own dullness. Never again, I say, shall I feel that there is nothing to write about. . . .

But I shall.

GLANDS

THE book before me is entitled *The Glands Regulating Personality*, and its author is Dr. Louis Berman, of Columbia University. This is not the kind of book which I normally review, or have any scientific competence to discuss. But I took it up casually, and a phrase in it struck me. Dr. Berman remarks:

> To bring to mind an immediate complete image of the hyperthyroid face, one should think of Shelley.

This agreeable association of ideas led me on; and finding the phrase, "A man's chief gift to his children is his internal secretion composition," I knew I must go through with it. Here, beyond doubt, was one more of these men with an explanation, satisfactory to himself, of everything that exists. So through thyroid and pituitary, pineal, adrenal and thymus I pursued my way, marvelling at one of the most remarkable medleys of erudition, illogicality, lack of taste, disinterested passion, complacency and bad English that I have seen since I read Freud's most humourless masterpiece, namely, his book on Wit.

Dr. Berman takes the glands one by one and outlines their spheres of influence. He compares them to the Directors of a large Corporation: he might almost call them our Glandlords. From one to another he passes in an almost lyrical strain. For example: "In such enthusiasm for the thyroid as a determinant of evolution, its pillar of cloud by day and column of fire by night, one should not forget the other glands of internal secretion." *En route* he

throws out numerous definitions. "Masculinity," he says, "may be described as a stable, constant state in the organism of lime salts, and the feminine as an unstable variable state of lime salts." "The mother expresses," he observes, "the deep craving of protoplasm for immortality." And, in a phrase reminiscent of Sir William Harcourt's, "We are all Socialists now," he says that we now recognise that "we are all, more or less, partial hermaphrodites." Almost everything has been run down except the fluid of love, which, beyond doubt, exists in the interstitial cells. Having done with the separate glands, he passes to consider their influence on personality. He uses Mr. Strachey's account of Florence Nightingale for a ruthless analysis of the glands that made her what she was; Cæsar, Napoleon, and Nietzsche are other of his specimens. He regrets that they did not live later, so that science could have rectified them. For the answer to "What is Man?" has been found. It is—I don't think it a very complete answer—"Man is regulated by his glands of Internal Secretion."

"The chemistry of the soul!" It is, says Dr. Berman, a great phrase. He looks forward—and, reading his book, one is tempted at times to share in this Larger Hope—to a time when statesmen will make it their business to raise the general level of intelligence by a judicious use of endocrine extracts." "Internal glandular analysis may become legally compulsory for those about to mate before the end of the present century." And then he becomes rhapsodic:

> The exact formula is yet far beyond our reach. But we have started upon the long journey and we shall get there. Then will Man truly become the experimental animal of the future, experimenting not only with the external conditions of his life, but with the constituents of his very nature and soul. The chemical conditions of his being, including the

internal secretions, are the steps of the ladder by which he will climb to those dizzy heights where he will stretch out his hands and find himself a God.

It is a strange idea of God. I suppose it doesn't much matter. The man who wants to Get Omniscient Quick is no new type. Pedantry, self-satisfaction, fantastic exaggeration are as old as the race. One would not even say, "Physician, inject thyself," to Dr. Berman; such men as he add to the colour of life; they rode other hobby-horses in the days of "Tristram Shandy," but their character, or glandular composition, remains unchanged. It is, however, a pity that they should now be commonest in the world of what used to be called exact science; for the excesses of the Freudians and their analogues have led many intelligent people into a very sceptical frame of mind about every scientific discovery and speculation whatsoever, particularly when these have a bearing upon the constitution of man. Twenty years ago William James, meeting Freud, described him in a letter as a monomaniac. The frontiers of psychology and physiology are infested by hosts of these ill-balanced persons who get hold of a little truth and turn it into an idol. Dr. Berman himself has an excellent image for the Freudians: he says they look at a small section of life through a telescope and think it is the universe. The metaphor applies precisely to himself; it is well enough, in a poet's sense, to see the universe in a grain of sand, but it is grotesque to see it in the glands. At best all he could do would be merely to identify a machine, and one amongst many.

He and his fellows may, however, win disciples amongst the large number of persons who are now able to dabble in this kind of easy science. And the one really serious result may be the infection of literature with it. I note such a passage as:

Christina may be adrenal cortex centred and so masculinoid: courageous, sporty, mannish in her tastes, aggressive towards her companions. Dorothea may have a balanced thyroid and pituitary, and so lead the class as good-looking, studious, bright, serene, and mature. Florence, who has rather more thyroid than her pituitary can balance, will be bright but flighty, gay but moody, energetic, but not as persevering.

It may prove very tempting to our novelists. All over the fiction of Europe and America the Freudian complexes are raging furiously together; when the novelists have tired of these they may get on to the glands; we shall have the Tragedy of a Pineal and the conflict between two highly-developed Adrenals. In one thing alone there is a gleam of hope. There is less satisfaction for the morbid curiosity in the glandular compilations than in the works of Freud and his school; less sensational material. Nobody will take up with the glands out of a desire to be audacious and shocking; they are dull affairs.

I revert to the phrase with which I opened. I cannot leave it there. One of my more highly-developed glands is secreting hard. Here is the result. A Ballade of the Glandular Hypothesis:

I

What Hormones had that proud Egyptian Queen?
And great Napoleon, who had cause to rue
Deficiency of the central endocrine
Which finally dried up at Waterloo?
Poor Shelley's optimism was undue,
He never should have dreamed at such a pace;
He said "The world's great age begins anew";
But Shelley had a hyper-thyroid face.

II

There is a strange secretion flows between
The interstitial cells; I grant it's true
It hasn't yet been actually seen,
Not even by the pioneering few;
Still it will soon be bottled, and on view,
The stuff that made an end of Ilium's race,
And launched a thousand ships into the blue:
But Shelley had a hyper-thyroid face.

III

The toad secretes too much adrenalin,
And drunkards are a thymo-centric crew,
Glandular hyper-functioning has been
Noted in Florence Nightingale; and you
Remember Mr. Julian Huxley drew
Very strange transformations which took place
In certain axolotls at the Zoo:
But Shelley had a hyper-thyroid face.

Envoi

Prince, let us end our rhymes, they will not do:
Our gonads may be large and full of grace,
And comely our pituitaries, too—
But Shelley had a *hyper-thyroid* face.

THE DESCENDANTS OF SHAKESPEARE

On April 23, 1919 (Shakespeare's birthday), I looked at the front page of the *Daily News*. I read there that the Italians had decided to take no further part in the discussions on the Adriatic problem, their view being formed; I learned, also, that the Roumanians had invaded Hungary. This done, I turned, as a man will, to the back page, which was covered with photographs. There were photographs of aeroplanes, of soldiers, of a lord and his son, of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau; and my eye roamed over them, until it was suddenly caught, as a bird's by a snake, by two bald and bearded human heads side by side. "On the left," I read, "is a photograph of Mr. Alfred Thomas Shakespeare Hart, of Lichfield, and on the right a portrait of Shakespeare, whose lineal descendant he is. The likeness is very striking." It is also very striking that a journalist could have published without more comment than this two portraits of two gentlemen of whom the later cannot possibly be a lineal descendant of Shakespeare, and the earlier is most unlikely to be Shakespeare himself. Any likeness which may exist between the two busts—and it is true that Mr. A. T. S. Hart has a bald and rounded forehead, a little pointed beard and an expanse of collar which vie with those pertaining to the Portrait (of, probably, an Italian)—is therefore not important.

Otherwise it would be very interesting. Even the remotest relative of Shakespeare must have a fascination about him: doubly strong, if we could feel sure that the dramatist's traits, by some far-reaching Mendelian sport, had been repeated in him. To the

lineal descendants or collaterals of other poets no such interest seems to attach. There are Coleridges and Wordsworths in plenty fulfilling various useful functions, but their names give us only a mild thrill. If the present Lord Byron and the present Lord Tennyson were walking down Bond Street together, the public would be no more excited than they are when the Duke of Wellington or Lord Nelson writes a letter to the *Times* or Mr. Dickens, K.C., rises in the Courts. A lineal descendant of Shakespeare would be the most exciting descendant on earth, more to be envied than the posterity of Confucius and Mahomet, each still greatly honoured in their own climes. But Mr. Alfred Thomas Shakespeare Hart is not a lineal descendant of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare had three children, Hamnet (who died young), Judith Quiney, and Susannah Hall. Judith had three children who died young and without issue. Susannah, wife of an eminent physician, and hostess (at New Place) of Queen Henrietta Maria, had one only daughter, Elizabeth. Elizabeth, Shakespeare's solitary grandchild, married, first, Thomas Nash, by whom she had no children, and then (Sir) John Barnard of Abington Manor, by whom also she had no children. Lady Barnard died in February, 1669–'70, and she was the last of Shakespeare's "lineal descendants." The family of Hart (to which I presume Mr. Alfred Thomas Shakespeare Hart, of Lichfield, belongs) is descended from Shakespeare's sister Joan, who married a Hart. To these Harts Lady Barnard bequeathed what is known as Shakespeare's Birthplace, which was in their occupation and which they had turned into an inn. The inn existed until 1846; the Harts sold it in 1806. Sir Sidney Lee quotes William Shakespeare Hart (1778–1834) as saying: "My grandfather used to obtain a great deal of money by showing the premises to strangers who used to visit them." There are advantages, as well as lustre, in being descended from

Shakespeare's sister; but it is not the same thing as being a lineal descendant.

The last lineal descendant to be discovered by the Press was announced in the *Morning Post* ten years ago. He was Mr. Charlemagne K. Hopper, an American then staying at the Carlton Hotel. His home was in the rising town of Bismarkville, Mo., where he dealt in "wheat both white and red, and of both spring and autumn varieties, maize or Indian corn, oats, rye, buckwheat of every variety, seed corn, and bearded barley," and he had "the *entrée* to the most exclusive coteries of Albany and Buffalo." Mr. Hopper's story was that Lady Barnard had a studiously concealed, illegitimate daughter Anne, who was ancestor of the Pooke family, whose connection with Mr. Hopper had been traced by "Mr. Cohen, a charming and cultivated genealogist, whose business is mainly with America and the Colonies." The last of the Pookes had, it seemed, left a daughter, Cassiopeia, who married the Rev. Mr. Aesop Hopper, a minister of the Hicksite persuasion in Cincinnati. The announcement was taken seriously by evening papers, who sent reporters hurriedly round to the Carlton Hotel to interview the Cygnet of Avon. But Mr. Hopper was merely an invention of Mr. Belloc's: his story may still be read in the volume of collected essays called *On Everything*.

We are certain, as far as we can be certain of anything of this sort, that Lady Barnard left no children and no descendants. But her husband's family is still going strong, and there is at least one living Barnard who has contributed to the Shakespeare discussion. This is Mr. Finch Barnard, who published recently a booklet which he called *Science and the Soul*, but which was in reality chiefly concerned with the genealogical glories of his family. He, as a Barnard, is not having the Baconian theory; but he says that it is quite obvious that Shakespeare of

Stratford never wrote the plays. "The real William Shakespeare," he says, "was a fast déclassé," and he seems to imagine that this is enough ground for saying that the author of Shakespeare was one of the Barnards. "There is small probability of a love match, and it is possible that Sir John Barnard married Shakespeare's grand-daughter for his second wife, partly in order to acquire the different MSS. of which the actors were probably allowed possession for stage purposes." The suggestion is that Sir John destroyed all the Shakespeare manuscripts, as some of them were too licentious to see the light of day.

Francis Feeble and Barnardine are both satires by the fast déclassé of his relative Francis Barnard. Silence and Slender "owe the same original"; "the venom of the Author of Shakespeare sticks at nothing." It will have been deduced by now that Mr. Finch Barnard is a little too interested in his family. How interested we begin to realize when he leaves Shakespeare and heads a chapter:

"CHRISTIANITY AND THE BARNARDS

"Some Historical and Genealogical Evidences of the Descent of the Barnards and Finches from Charlemagne and from Adam."

S. Bernard was a Barnard; so was S. Francis of Assisi. They were both descended from the Emperor Charlemagne. S. Francis "was in his youth a leader of his young fellow nobles of Assisi; he turned from profligate to priest. In many ways a true Barnard." Charlemagne came from Adam through Askenaz, a German giant:

"Askenaz was the son of Gomer, who was son of Japhet, eldest son of Noah, and elder branch to the Jews. Aventinus, however, makes Askenaz a fourth

son of Noah. This great family was represented in England by the ancient Barnard and Finch family."

"Where," proceeds Mr. Barnard, "would Shakespeare or any other of our literature in Western Europe have been without the Barnards and the monasteries?" There was Charles Martel, there were Roland and Oliver. But, examining the genealogy of a greater still, he says:

> "The great and mystic significance attaches to the name of Barnard in regard to life and religion, and the mysterious relations between spiritual and animal life. . . . There is not only a spiritual lien and a pedigreal between themselves, but probably also a blood, as well as a spiritual, tie with Jesus Christ."

This is the sort of thing that happens to people who are too enthusiastic about their ancestors.

PROPERTY IN PROPER NAMES

A MULTITUDE of British novelists breathed a sigh of relief when it became known that a British jury had turned down very emphatically the claim for damages brought against Mr. George Moore by a music-hall artist named Louis Seymour. Mr. Moore produced a new edition of his book *A Modern Lover*, under the new name of *Lewis Seymour and Some Women*. The real Mr. Seymour alleged that he had suffered considerable annoyance owing to this. Some very unpleasant things were said about the book in the course of the action. Counsel for the plaintiff made a reference to "a mass of salacious and disgusting details which rendered the book unique in pornography," and the judge jumped hard both upon the hero and upon the book. Many people, perhaps, will share the judge's views of some of Mr. Moore's literary efforts, and some perhaps would be happy to see Mr. Moore mulcted anywhere and for any reason. But no sensible man can help feeling that the jury was perfectly right when it said: (1) that no reasonable person would think that the Lewis Seymour of Mr. Moore's book was a portrait of a real person; and (2) that no reasonable person would think that Mr. Moore's book referred to the plaintiff. One cannot help feeling, in fact, that the plaintiff must have been a pretty cool customer to bring the action at all, for the book was written long ago, and the real Mr. Seymour only took his present name a few days ago, his father's name being Kempner! There therefore could be no possible suggestion that Mr. Moore had maliciously attacked him or had even heard of him when he wrote.

I remember two other cases of the sort. In the first case a paper in the North published a sketch in which a character named, I think, Artemus Jones, was exhibited in an unfavourable light. It was held to be proved that plaintiff was liable to suffer serious damage from the libel, and he was awarded a large sum of money. A year or two later a Sunday newspaper ran a serial story in which one of the less exemplary characters bore a conspicuous and unusual name which happened to be that of a gentleman who lived in much the same professional world as the fictitious character. Here, again, heavy damages were given. Even those cases caused novelists qualms, for it was evident that coincidence might go far and the most innocent of men might possibly libel and, if he were accidentally close enough in his description, seriously injure, a total stranger. But if the enterprising Mr. Seymour had won his case, one simply does not know what novelists would have done. They would still presumably have been all right with their heroes and heroines—at least with those that were well up to the usual novelist's standard of impeccability. But as for the ordinary light and shade people, and still more the villains, the weaklings, the profligates, the criminals, the murderers, the blackmailers, the coiners, the spies and the adventuresses, it would have been utterly impossible to name them at all without imperilling one's household and the whole future of one's wife and children.

For unusual names are no guarantee of immunity whatever. You may work as hard as you like in the regions of the grotesque and the unlikely, but when you have concocted names like Arabel Pickels or Marmaduke Honeyblossom Whoopingnose, the chances are that from Clapton or Sydenham or Blackpool or Merthyr Tydvil some Dread Unknown will start up and ask why his or her name, long known and honoured in the locality, has been thus pilloried.

Dickens's names look preposterous enough, but he used to get them out of the London Directory. If he had made them up out of his head he would probably have found them in the London Directory afterwards. No name is entirely impossible in this country, as I realized recently when, walking along the main street of a small cathedral city, I observed over a draper's shop the almost incredible cognomen of Gotobed. The only people who do occasionally produce an English name that probably is unreal are French novelists. They try to do the thing correctly. They consequently construct their English surnames out of English surnames that they have seen. But they very often put together syllables which, though quite common, are for some reason quite incompatible. They have seen, for example, such names as Oldham and Hawkins, and they will come out with an English governess called Agnes Oldkins, and a sporting English baronet with the highly improbable designation of Sir John Hawham. But even here I do not feel that I am on perfectly safe ground, and I should not really be surprised if after this appears letters reached me from eager readers in the backwoods assuring me that in their districts the name of Oldkins and Hawham are and always have been most common in the parish register.

Common names, one need scarcely say, would have been no protection whatever if Mr. Seymour had won his action. It was pointed out in Court that there were three persons of the name of Louis Seymour in the London Directory. I do not see why, if one Mr. Seymour had won, another Mr. Seymour should not—assuming that one of the others were the sort of person who would bring an action—have had a go himself and won also; or why, for that matter, twenty Lewis Seymours from all over the kingdom should not have come in turn to Court, alleged in turn that their private lives had been embittered by the

poisonous emissions of Mr. Moore's pen, and secured seriatim such damages that in the end Mr. Moore would have had to sell Moore Hall (thus escaping from the dispute about the graziers) and go to America steerage in order to begin a new life in a place where he was not known. Still worse would have been the fate of novelists who should have called the evil-doer John Jones, Henry Smith, William Brown, Edward Williams, or Evan Davies. Claimants would have rushed forward by thousands, and we might even have come to the point at which people would find it worth while to assume the name of Quilp, Raffles, Fagan, Bill Sykes, Svengali, Shylock, or even Cain, in order to sue authors or publishers who appeared prosperous enough to offer a good harvest. In the end novelists would have been driven to calling their people by letters or numbers. We should have read that: "A. B. buried her head in her arms, and wept long and bitterly as she thought of that beautiful day when she and C. D. had sat in bliss under the blue Mediterranean sky and by the side of the blue Mediterranean sea, before that awful day when E. F. and G. H. had come between them"; or that: "No. 1 flung open the door with a shout. As it opened he saw No. 8 and No. 76 in close confabulation over a bundle of papers which the latter hurriedly passed behind his back to No. 2002, though not sufficiently rapidly to escape No. 1's attention." The only alternative would have been for novelists to have given up writing altogether. And, on the whole, I am not sure that this——

DR. DONNE'S TOMB

I HAD made a reference to "theological booksellers who cater for clergymen and regard Donne primarily not as John Donne, but as the Dean of St. Paul's." Two days afterwards I met a soldier in the streets who talked about this. He said that he thought Dr. Inge had points of resemblance to Donne and was an original and remarkable man. I agreed with this. He then said that he had never seen Donne's tomb and effigy; I said that I knew it only from reproductions. We thought we would go there. We began to walk. It began to rain. We stopped a taxi. I said: "St. Paul's Cathedral, please," and the driver gaped. My companion then said: "Don't you know where it is?" and the driver's mouth closed up and expanded horizontally. So off we went, quite a happy party.

Had I the space, the inclinations and the talents of the realistic novelist, I should go on with this leisurely detail. I should indicate the colour of the cabman's nose (though perhaps you can guess that), the amount of paper on the cathedral steps, the dispositions of the pigeons, the bleachings and blackenings on pillars and walls, the dress, attitudes, and banal remarks of the people who emerged as we went in, the sounds made by various footsteps, the light streaming through various windows, and the probable occupations and domestic infelicities of the persons who, scattered about the rows of chairs, were awaiting the opening of the four o'clock service. But this is impossible. Compression is essential, and all these things must be left to the imagination. For me, I must hurry on with my story, if story it be.

We went up the south aisle and drew blank; there were some terrible monuments which should

certainly join the great majority in Westminster Abbey. We then tried the north aisle. We wondered why Alfred Stevens had put his powerful equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington so high that no one could see it. We remarked that there was one sentence on the tomb of Gordon (that about his remaining at Khartoum) which, like many lapidary inscriptions, did not tell the whole truth. We thought that the tomb of Lord Leighton, though not a masterpiece, illustrated the enormous advance made by modern academic work as against eighteenth century academic work. We then reached the end of the aisle and found a group of vergers. They were white-haired and wrinkled; their black gowns and long silver crooks inspired a respect which verged on fear. The conversation that followed showed that theological booksellers and their customers are not the only people who think of Donne as primarily a divine:

"'Could you tell us where the tomb of John Donne is?'

"'Who?'

"'John Donne; Dean Donne.'

"'Oh; *Dean* Donne!'"

They lifted a little red rope from its support, showed us across and let us into the aisle at the south of the choir. There, in a dark place flat against the wall, it stood: the only monument in Old St. Paul's, I think, which escaped the great Fire of London. He stands, with his hands folded and the shroud covering him from head to foot; his intense, sardonic face, with its eyes closed, looks out from his hood and is the only thing of him that shows. It is a queer, stark, frozen thing: there is no beauty about it, but a force that makes everything else in the Cathedral seem dead. The sculptor was not a great artist; but he must have been under the spell of Donne when he made it. I think it is in Isaac Walton's *Life* that

we read the story of Donne's preparations for that effigy; how he rose from his sick-bed, had braziers lit all about his great room at the Deanery, and stood upon an urn in that attitude of death whilst a painter sketched him. On that painting the statue in St. Paul's was presumably based. But not entirely. The folds of the drapery are the folds into which a recumbent man's would fall. It appears, therefore, that the sculptor used a recumbent model for his drapery; he may have intended his effigy to lie flat along a tomb, as effigies usually do; for all I know (though here I may have some antiquary correcting me) the effigy did lie flat at first, and was never erect until Wren had built his new Cathedral. At all events there it is; cold in a quiet corner; and both by its coldness and its strength very out of keeping with its surroundings. "Out of keeping" is a weak phrase. In that great, complacent, Italianate building, which looks so much smaller than it is, a building designed with skill but no inspiration, lacking all mystery, all fervour, all sense of the fierceness of life, the terror and the importance of death, the insistence of a surrounding eternity, the power or the love or the beauty of God, this small, crinkled statue is like a word of challenge or rebuke, and of lordly derison. No place but a Gothic building would properly hold it; and it is seemly that that should be so with a statue of Dean Donne. He was, in some ways, a child of the Renaissance: he had its learning, its curiosity, and, in youth, its swagger and its recklessness. But still more he had affinity with the scholars of the Middle Ages in whom he was profoundly read; and that affinity is never more strongly realized than when one is reading his Sermons with their passionate, tortuous extravagant logic and their towering caverns of gloom shot with unearthly fire. Donne's brain was the strangest and most elaborate Gothic building ever seen on earth.

A FORGOTTEN CAROLINE

In America to-day literary research is being conducted on a scale unparalleled in the world's history. In countless universities countless professors and aspirants to the doctorate are writing treatises or editing old books. A good deal of the work produced is amusingly pedantic and purposeless. People will write long theses on *Ten Soliloquies of Marlowe Contrasted and Compared*, or *The Use of the Infinitive in Pope's Homer*. But often these books put readers of poetry deeply in the debt of American scholarship. Among such is Miss Eloise Robinson's edition of Beaumont, which is published under the auspices of the Department of English Literature at Wellesley College.

Joseph Beaumont, who was born in 1616 and died in 1699, was a member of that group of poets of which Crashaw, Vaughan, and Traherne are more celebrated members. A High Church clergyman, he was expelled from his fellowship at Cambridge under the Commonwealth, returned to the University after the Restoration, and ended his life as Master of Peterhouse. His long poem *Psyche* was reprinted by Grosart, who also reprinted the selection from his minor poems first issued in 1749. But the majority of his minor poems, which exist in an MS. owned by Professor G. H. Palmer, of Harvard, have never before been printed. Miss Robinson has now made the whole of them accessible; and she has added bibliographical and critical introductions which leave nothing to be desired.

It is not to be supposed that the discovery of these poems is anything like as important as was that of

Traherne's. A great deal of the interest of Beaumont's poetry lies in the sidelight it throws on the general literary tendencies of the day and on the work of his greater contemporaries in particular. His subject-matter was theirs; his opinions were theirs; his phraseology was largely theirs; but comparison of his work with that of Crashaw and Vaughan shows how differently men of differing powers will work with the same materials. He will address St. Teresa, but not with Crashaw's passion; he will muse upon eternity, but not with Vaughan's vision; and the stock classical allusions to the Phœnix (say) or to Arabia, which greater poets could use a hundred times, yet always with freshness, are with him stock allusions and nothing more. All the faults they had Beaumont had in double measure. Most of his poems did not spring from the imagination; his method rather was to seize any event or story that happened to catch his eye and batter his brains for a spiritual analogy for it. His imagery was sometimes most ludicrously laboured. "Whilst I," he writes on his birthday (only his 32nd),

> behind Me cast my annual Ey,
> What do I but my *Sodome* spy!
> O lamentable sight
> Which justly might
> Not fix me in a pile of Salt,
> But all my guilty Essence melt
> Into a flood of Pænitence, whose Tide
> Might drown that which is gone,
> And let me safely on
> Its back unto the shore of this *Year* ride.

The Leviathan, which wrenched from Vaughan his phrase "the comely spacious whale," led Beaumont to an equally unfortunate effort:

Thy Prophet Thou didst summon from
His living Tombe,
Where twice-devoured He,
Lay drowned both in the Whale, and Sea.

His image of the Lord of Light passing through "His chrystall Mothers wombe" leaving her "intirely whole" exactly anticipates an image that Gibbon invented to ridicule the Virgin Birth, and when he set for "a Base and 2 Trebles" a lilt beginning:

Fond Syllogismes, in vaine
You arme your Propositions Three
Against Religious Trinitie.

And proceeding to discuss the "Angles in the Eternall Trigon" he was certainly writing for an age rather than for all time. A great deal of his verse is not even quaint like this; but much of it is interesting and some of the shorter lyrics are really beautiful. *The Relapse, The Evening Hymn, The Morning Hymn, The Alarm, Games, The Duel, The Gentle Check, Suspirium,* would all be worth including in a seventeenth-century anthology. So would the noble *Pretence* (now first published), with its exhortation to himself "to walk the hardy and heroik Way" and "By his deer Blood to trace The gallant Footsteps of thy *Lord.*" It is impossible to quote this in full here, or the exquisite *Easter Dialogue* either; but a few lines from the latter will show how beautiful it is. The Magdalen is weeping at the tomb. The Saviour appears and she thinks He is a gardener:

JESUS: Woman, to what loss do thine Eyes
Such full drink offerings sacrifice?

MAGDALENE: Sweet Gardner, if thy Hand it were
Which did transplant Him; Tell me where

Thou sett'dst that pretious Root on whome
Grow all my hopes; and I will from
That Soile remove him to a Bed
With Balme and Myrrh and Spices spred,
Where by mine Eyes two Fountains He
For evermore shall waterd be.

JESUS: Mary.

MAGDALENE: O Master!

ANGEL (1st and 2nd): With what sweet
Fury she flies at his deer Feet,
To weep and kiss out what She by
Her Toung could never signify!

It was rarely that Beaumont wrote lines as good as these; "sweet fury" could have been bettered by none of his contemporaries. He was not built to become a great poet. Neither poetic nor religious ardours burnt fiercely with him. Poetry he did not consider his serious business, and, as a rule, his self-communings took the form rather of a slightly complacent self-examination than of real spiritual strife. He was thoroughly religious, but seldom passionately so; he revered the saints, but wrote of them rather as items in a calendar than as suffering and aspiring human beings; he became one of the fattest pluralists of his day, and he lived to a very advanced age in full possession of his faculties and his emoluments.

EDINBURGH : THE MISSING MONUMENT

How a man of letters must respect the Scotch! No other people, not excepting the ancient Athenians or the modern Bostonians, have so respected men of letters. Waiters, navvies and bagmen, who were they born English would never have heard of Dickens or Tennyson, seem familiar with every circumstance in the lives, as well as the works, of Scott and Burns. Any man within fifty miles of Scott's gorgeous home can tell you the way to it and possibly (though I did not test this) the charge for admission; and an author in Edinburgh feels that he has reached the author's Paradise. Here do the poet, even the minor poet, and the novelist come into their own; streets, hotels, stations, are named in their honour; their memories are omnipresent and their monuments vie with the grandest. It is a great and a beautiful city; I can find only one (barring the Sunday closing) fault with it. I put it as a question. Why has Edinburgh no monument, or rather no noticeable monument, to Stevenson? [1]

I should think that there is no town in the world which has so much commemorative architecture and sculpture to the square mile as Edinburgh. For more than a century its inhabitants have been possessed with a delightful mania for beautifying the promenades of the living and celebrating the virtues of the dead. The hills of the City are thickly clad with feudal battlements and Grecian porticoes. You will see the dawn through an open classic arcade, the mid-day orb over a mediæval keep, the sunset

[1] Something has since been done.

fretted with Gothic spires and towers. There are vast circular halls that might have pleased Justinian, tall columns that might have excited the envy of Trajan, the fluted pillar, the arch, the broken pediment, the cross, the obelisk: and almost all are memorials. So also, in the nature of things, are the statues. These are in number as the sands of the sea. They throng the gardens of Princes Street, the squares, the façades of public buildings; no eligible crossroad or patch of sky suitable for silhouetting lacks its doctor in marble or its philanthropist in bronze. There are soldiers, some; lawyers, physicians and theologians, many. There are also men of letters and philosophers. Most, naturally, are Scotsmen. Wellington and Nelson are exceptions: of the former there is an equestrian bronze, and the monument of Nelson is the Kew Pagoda of Edinburgh as the Scott Monument is the Albert Memorial. Even the enthusiastic writer who, for me, deputized the late Baedeker, could find no more to say of it than that it is "a structure more like an observatory or a lighthouse than a monument." Abraham Lincoln has a monument, and eke George IV., the justification for this, apparently, being that he once visited Edinburgh. Charles II. and Prince Albert stand in these streets, Livingstone and Pitt, David Hume, Dugald Stewart, Allan Ramsay, "Christopher North," two publishers, and a dog that died of grief. Royal personages sometimes excepted, no doubt all these excellent men, as also the animal, deserved well of Edinburgh, and of the human race. The more memorials the merrier, if the commemorated be worthy; Edinburgh has been prolific of talent and virtue, and she is a perfect frame for monumental art. Moreover, she cannot be accused, in a general way of doing otherwise than handsomely by literature. The Scott Monument is only less conspicuous than the Castle, which has an unfair

pull owing to its eminence; and if a Greek peripteral temple is not quite the most congruous of conceivable memorials to Burns, the Burns Monument was at least well meant, is large and conspicuous, and, at a distance, looks uncommonly well. But where is Stevenson?

I do not suggest that Edinburgh, merely because it is the capital town, should possess a statue of every Scottish worthy who ever existed. She need not have had a statue of James Watt, who could reasonably be left to Glasgow and Greenock. If she has no statue—and there may be one—to James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, after all, kept sheep in Ettrick and not cows in the Cowgate. She may, without thinking of emulation, contemplate the imposing effigy of a ram which stands in the market place at Moffat, or the equally impressive (and I hope equestrian) statue of Sir Henry Dalziel which will some time grace the market-place of Kirkcaldy. But she ought to make a point, and she has made rather a point, of overlooking nobody of importance who was born in Edinburgh or who long resided there, or did important work there, or was a benefactor to the City. And surely Stevenson might come in under any of these categories.

He was born in Edinburgh, he went to school in Edinburgh, he was an undergraduate at Edinburgh University. And above all he loved the City and everything within reach of it. There is nothing more convincing in his last letters from Samoa than those passages, in which, overshadowed by death, he told one correspondent that he knew he would never see Auld Reekie again, and asked another to go down to the burn at Glencorse, and look into the water for him. He had his limitations, and I for one am not of the unqualified admirers. But if there is one thing more than another that he did, and did marvellously, it was the depiction of Edinburgh and her

borders, done so vividly that a stranger who has read him knows them place by place when he sees them: the wynds and closes off the High Street where such as the Body-snatchers lived, the discreet Georgian squares and crescents of the New Town where young Edinburgh quarrelled with its dour father, the roads that led through meadows and small woods to the Pentlands and the desolate Lammermuirs, the little pier by Queensferry, the Bass Rock. He felt a profound affection, and he communicated his affection. Edinburgh was perhaps more to him than to Scott himself, and he certainly showed us more of Edinburgh as we know it. All this is known to Scotsmen, and, judging by the booksellers' counters, there is a larger consumption of his books in Edinburgh than in any other town in the world. Yet Edinburgh has not put up a monument to him. There is a tablet on a church wall, there may be a plaque on some one of the houses in which he lived, and Swanston is beautifully kept and garnished by a devotee. But there is no statue, no Greek temple, no decorated pile, no Duomo: at least if there be such a thing it must be too recent for my guide book or my local interlocutors to have heard of it and either too small and secluded to be noticed or too huge to be suspected. One always likes to guard oneself on these occasions, and I shall be only too happy to find that I have made a ridiculous mistake. Perhaps that new church was the thing . . . or that sumptuous cinema in the Babylonian Renaissance style. If I am wrong I withdraw; but if I am right I am very much puzzled. Do they want a subscription started in England?

FIRE AND THE HEART OF MAN

It was eleven o'clock at night. I was preparing to write an essay. I was going to write it about a book. The book was a good and a beautiful book; it filled me with the noblest thoughts, made me a better man and fit for the most heroic actions. It was full of sagacity, of sound reasoning, of imagination checked by sense, of reflection shot through with vision. It was not only a good book, but a large and solid book, a book to be chewed like the cud, remembered and returned to, a virtuous and courageous book, a book of mettle, a book of weight. Unfortunately, or fortunately, just as I had finished reading the book and was biting the end of my fountain-pen, wondering how in God's name I was to do it justice, I looked out of my attic window. The trees stood dark across the road; the river lay dark beyond the trees; but the light of the stars was not the only light. On the horizon, behind some trees and a house, glowing, reddening, rolling, there was a Fire.

There may be people who, when they see Fire in the distance, say, "Oh, what a pity! I hope the Insurance Company will not suffer heavily"; or, "What a waste of material!" There may be people who say, "There is a Fire"—and then go to bed. There may even be people who say, "Well, what if there is a Fire?"—and turn grumpily to resume their discussion about the ethics of Palæontology or the Finances of a Co-operative Kitchen. If such people exist, I am not among them. When I saw this Fire I ran downstairs as hard as I could pelt and knocked up a neighbour. I said to him, "There is a Fire. Look!" He answered, "By Jove! so there

is." I said, "It may be twenty miles away or two miles away. The farther the bigger. If it is a long walk the compensation is proportionate." He said, "Wait a minute till I put on my boots." I said, "All right; but buck up or the Fire may die down." He hurried; and we started walking. We did not know whither we were walking. All we knew was, and this thought slightly depressed us, that the direction of the Fire put out of the question any hope that it was the Albert Memorial or the Queen Victoria Memorial that was in process of combustion.

We walked along the river, past the terrace and the cocoa-butter factory, and the nuns' school, and the creek, and the boathouses. The glare increased steadily as we went. When we reached the bridge it was in full view. An enormous factory was blazing away on the edge of the river below the bridge; the great span cut dark across the flames and the glow. As we climbed to the bridge we saw that there was a thin row of silent people leaning over the ironwork —looking at the Fire. The stars were above them and the velvet dark sky; the river flowed below them; a few hundred yards away great flames and intervolved clouds of smoke poured out of a huge building, the top windows of which were almost intolerably bright. The roof had gone and the pillars of stonework between the windows looked like the pillars of some ruined Greek temple against a magnificent gold sunset. It was all gold and blue; the moving gold and the still, all-embracing blue; and the crowd said nothing at all. There was no sound except when a great stretch of masonry fell in, and then there was a swelling sigh like that which greets the ascent of a rocket at a firework display. There was a wind, and it was chill; we passed on over the bridge and descended to the tow-path on the opposite bank. Along that path we went until we were opposite the Fire. About eight people, very indistinct

in the gloom, were scattered amongst the waterside bushes. In front of us a fire-boat took up its position. Below and around the Fire little lights flashed; there were lights above the river (which was at low tide); voices shouted terrifically from the other bank; voices, addressed to 'Arry, answered from the boat, and made reference to a line. An engine began working; hoses could be seen sending rising and falling sprays of water against a blaze that seemed capable of defying all the water in all the seas.

There we stood, watching. Only one sentence did we hear from our awed neighbours. There was a man who in the darkness looked portly and moustached. He took his pipe out of his mouth and said, optimistically, "Nice breeze; it *ought* to fan it along." "Along" meant an enormous oil warehouse and wharf. Overhearing that remark, I told myself the truth. The moral man in me, the citizen, the patriot, were all fighting hard for supremacy. I was trying to say to myself: "This may mean ruin to somebody; you ought to pray that it should be got under at once"; and "How can you bear to see so much painfully-won material wastefully consumed?" and "This stuff would probably be useful to mankind; it has employed labour; its loss may be serious; its replacement may be difficult." But all that company of virtuous selves fought a losing battle. Aloud or in quietness I (or they) could say all this and much more; but the still, small voice kept on repeating, "Don't you be a humbug. It's no good. You *want* this Fire to spread. You want to forget what it all means. You will be disappointed if the firemen get it under. You would like to see the next place catch fire, and the next place, and the next place, for it would be a devil of a great display." Peccavi; that was certainly so.

They got it under. They cornered it. Flames gave way to a great smoke; the smoke grew and

grew; the path and the bushes faded from red into the indistinct hue of the starlit night. The mental glow died down; we felt cold, and moved, and walked towards home. And as we walked I meditated on the glory of Fire, fit subject for a poet, refreshment for the human spirit and exaltation for the soul. My emotions, when looking at it, had not been entirely base; I had felt, not merely a sensuous pleasure in the glories of that golden eruption under the blue roof of night, but wonder at the energies we keep under, their perpetuity and their source, and the grandeur of man, living amid so much vastness and power, valiantly struggling to cope with things greater than himself, save that they have no souls. And I thought that in the perfect and hygienic State where the firemen would find water, water, everywhere, where the Super-Hose would be in use, where everything would be built of fireproof materials, and where extinguishers of a capacity not conceived by us would be available as a last resort, the wise sovereign would set apart beautiful large buildings, all made of timber, filled with oil, tar and sugar, surrounded with waste land and fronted by a wide reflecting river, which would periodically be set on fire for the consolation and the uplifting of men. I don't want a big Fire made impossible.

And I wondered why it was that fire on a huge scale had never yet adequately inspired a poet. And then I thought that poets had, after all, done as yet very little, considering the materials that are daily displayed before them; and then I found great comfort and courage in the thought that the commonplace things, the things we all see and know, live by and live with, have so far merely been skirted, and that the provinces which remain to be explored and described and celebrated by imaginative writers are endless, and that only corners have as yet been spied into.

WHO'S WHO

WORKS of reference are extremely useful; but they resemble Virgil's Hell in that they are easy things to get into and very difficult to escape from. Take the Encyclopædia. I imagine that my experience with it is universal. I have only to dip my toe into this tempting morass and down I am sucked, limbs, trunk and all, to remain embedded until sleep or a visitor comes to haul me out. A man will read things in an Encyclopædia that he would never dream of looking at elsewhere—things in which normally he does not take the faintest interest. One may take up a volume after lunch in order to discover the parentage of Thomas Nashe; but one does not put it down when one has satisfied one's curiosity. One turns over a few pages and becomes absorbed in the career of Napoleon. Thence one drifts to the article on Napier, which sends one to that on Logarithms in another volume; and when night closes in and (as we used to construe it) sleep brings rest to weary mortals, one still sits in one's chair, bending heavy-eyed over the book, with a dozen pressing duties left undone and the last post missed. By that time one has reached, perhaps, the abnormally complex diagrams which illustrate the article on Metaphysico-theologico-cosmolo-nigology — of which science, the reader will remember, Voltaire was the father and Herr Doktor Pangloss the first professor.

Who's Who takes me in the same way. Ordinarily I have no particular thirst for it. I should not dream of carrying it about in my waistcoat pocket for perusal on the Underground Railway. But once I have allowed myself to open it, I am a slave to it for hours,

This has just happened to me with the new volume, upon which I have wasted a valuable afternoon. I began by looking up a man's address; I then read the compressed life-story of the gentleman next above him (a major-general), wondering, somewhat idly, whether they read of each other's performances and whether either of them resented the possession by the other of a similar, and unusual, surname. Then I was in the thick of it. There was nothing especially exciting about most of the information that met my eye. Generally speaking, the biographies were of people of whom I had never previously heard, and whose doubtlessly reputable achievements had been recorded in spheres as unfamiliar to me as the dark side of the moon. What can it mean to me that Mr. J. Fitztimmins Gubb worked for five years under Schmitt at Magdeburg and is now demonstrator in Comparative Obstetrics at the Robson Institute? Or that the Bishop of the Cocos Islands has been five times married and was educated at King Edward VI. Grammar School, Chipping Chester, and Pembroke College, Oxford? Yet I read of some six or seven hundred such, and found it as difficult to refrain from "Just one more" as would a wealthy dipsomaniac just parting from an old friend in a public-house at five minutes before closing time. I cannot easily account for the attraction. Something, I suppose, may be put down to the fact that character comes out in a man's account, however bald, of himself; and that the *Who's Who* autobiographies, in spite of their compression, exhibit many and diverse interesting traits of character. But mainly, I think, it must be that we most of us have collector's mania in some form or another, and that one cannot resist the temptation of collecting facts even when they are so irrelevant and of so little importance to one that they slip through one's fingers as soon as one has gathered them. For I am sure that I do not know

now whether I have got the number of the Bishop's wives right, or the sites of his education, or even the name of his diocese.

I suppose that no one ever tells an untruth in *Who's Who*. There is not much scope for it, though it is conceivable that there may have been exaggerations of the truth. The compilers are extremely capable; and the contributors seem to be as uniform in their veracity as they are various in their loquacity. Only in rare circumstances could any one hope to impose on *Who's Who* without very rapid detection. An opportunity of that nature did once occur to me. There is a compilation called the *American Who's Who*, published (if I remember correctly) in Chicago. By some curious accident, which I have never been able to explain, its conductors got hold of my name. By some accident more curious still they got the impression that I was an American settled in London; and with admirable enterprise they sent me, for two or three years in succession, yellow forms on which I was requested to inscribe my age, antecedents, and accomplishments. Each year I was dazzled by the idea of a joke which, I felt, would immensely amuse me, and which could (so the Devil argued) hurt nobody. On each occasion I filled the form exhaustively. I put down my name and address correctly; but beyond that not a word of truth did I tell. I invented for myself a career, a career not imposing enough to arouse suspicions, but far more picturesque than my actual career has been. I described my parents as being Homer E. —— and Anna P. ——, of St. Louis, Mo. I copied out of an American minor poet's autobiographical preface a list of academies at which I had been educated; and then I launched out.

I had, I stated, left America for Europe at the age of nineteen. I had written (I was cunning enough to put down the names of one or two of my actual works) such and such books, including a Manual (for Schools)

on Political Economy and a small brochure on Polycarp. I had travelled over four continents; my recreations were "all forms of sports, especially big-game hunting"; I had gone through the Balkan War as a volunteer with the Greek Army; and I possessed several decorations, including the Blue Boar of Rumania, the St. Miguel and All Angels of Portugal, and the fourth class of the Turkish Medjidie. Notice the fourth class; no common liar would have thought of so convincingly modest a claim as that. Each year, as I say, I lived laborious days in the delineation of an imaginary pedigree and a supposititious career. Then I broke down. There was no risk of punishment attached, and, I take it, small risk of discovery. But my softer self began telling me that it was a scandalous thing to hoax foreigners; that the trick was unworthy of an Englishman, or, indeed, an adult of any nationality, down to the most backward of Nicobar Islanders; and that the only fitting punishment for a person addicted to such practices would be to have pins put upon his chair by his children or his back chalked by infants in the street. I weakened and broke; sentiment overcame reason; my heart gained the victory over my head. And each year, with reluctant deliberation, I tore up the well-filled sheet and destroyed again my other self, my American self, the romantic self who had done the things I had never done, who had stalked the bear in the snowy fastnesses of the Caucasus and won the gratitude of exotic potentates. The forms have stopped coming now; but the memory of my vision still burns with a melancholy yet tender brightness; and those mythical progenitors, Homer E. —— and Ann P. ——, are to me all that his Dream Children were to Charles Lamb.

THE BEAUTIES OF BADNESS

THE collector of amusingly bad poetry has never had such splendid opportunities as to-day. The world is all before him where to choose. Modern cheap production has made it easy for any one who can raise £20 to get a volume of poems printed; and of recent years the field has been greatly enriched by the growing body of verse-writers in America and the Colonies. There have always, of course, been poets who have given unintentional rather than intentional pleasure. I have before me a volume published (at Cambridge) in 1825, entitled *Original Poems in the Moral, Heroic, Pathetic, and other Styles, by a Traveller*, which contains poems in the following style—amongst others:

INGRATITUDE

My Muse, who oft recites on Love,
  Or Heavenly Beatitude,
Her strains more melancholy move
  Devoted to INGRATITUDE.

With thee, Dark Demon—what can charm?
  Nor manners polish'd—chaste or rude;
Nor Friendship's hand—nor Safety's arm
  So vile art thou—INGRATITUDE!

Tho' dear a Female's face, or form;
  Tho' elegant her attitude;
We fly, as from the winged storm—
  If she pours forth INGRATITUDE.

But it is seldom that the collector comes across one

of these delightful relics from an older day. The greater part of any collection must be formed of books published within the last forty years. Our age may be—indeed, it is—deficient in some respects, but in the production of unintentionally amusing writers no age, not even the Renaissance or the great ages of Greece and Rome, can vie with it.

It might be possible for a man with the industry of a Herbert Spencer exhaustively to classify the writers of whom I am speaking, and to tabulate the qualities which give to their works their peculiar virtues—incongruity of image, unfortunate use of colloquialisms, hopeless slavery to the necessity of rhyme, and so on. I am no Spencer; indeed, the only things I have in common with that philosopher are a taste for billiards and the recollection of a single visit to the Derby. To me there is a single broad division which connoisseurs may find useful in arranging their collections: in one class we may put those poets who are specifically cranky; in the other those (some silly, some quite sensible people apart from their artistic proclivities) who (Macaulay's Robert Montgomery is the type) try to write poems like other people's, but whose total lack of poetic perception leads them into strange aberrations of expression.

The first kind are comparatively rare, but there are some good examples still going strong. There is, for instance, a gentleman (at one time a distinguished scholar of Balliol) who describes himself as "The Modern Homer," and has written a number of epics, including *The Human Epic*, *The Epic of London*, *The Epic of Charlemagne*, and *The Epic of God and the Devil*. Preoccupation with his matter leads him to such phrases as:

> When murder is on the *tapis*
> Then the Devil is happy.

But he, perhaps, is not so interesting as Mr. William Nathan Stedman, who used to live in London, and now, I believe, is settled in Australia. This gentleman is addicted to prefaces proving that Mr. Gladstone, "this DIRTY OLD DEVIL," "this sly old wizard, a protoplasm from the abyss of nowhere," was the Beast of the Revelation, and he has an aversion from Mr. R. J. Campbell, whom he calls "moo-cow, kid-gloved Campbell." It is well worth while buying his *Sonnets, Lays and Lyrics*. The poems themselves are not so amusing, though we sometimes came across such ambiguous phrases as:

> And when upon your dainty breast I lay
> My wearied head—more soft than eiderdown.

But the illustrations—wood-blocks from eminent artists like Albert Dürer and Louis Wain—are charmingly irrelevant, and the prose passages are unique. The poet refers to the Laureateship—"an office I refused after Tennyson's death, though made with the offer of a premier's daughter and £30,000"—and he is violently down on critics who have failed to see the merits of a certain novelist whom he calls "Queen Marie," "a woman who did you no wrong, nor envied ye your bones and offal, but gave Most Interesting Books for your betterment and education. Are ye not dirty dogs and devils? Eh?" "Bull-browed bastards" is one of the mildest terms he applies to the critics.

Difficult to place in either class are the poets who have some technical faculty, who are not necessarily cranks, but who endeavour to put such extraordinarily prosy things into verse that the result is as comic as though they were. I have, for example, a book containing "a lyrical romance in verse," which tells a story, that might have gone quite well in prose, of a man who falls in love with a girl and has long

discussions with her about politics. The author's choice of a metrical form leads him to pages and pages of this sort of thing:

I ceased, and somewhat eagerly she asked:
" Then you would justify the Socialist,
Or Anarchist, the brute assassin, masked
As a reformer, him who has dismissed
All scruples, and himself or others tasked
To murder innocence? Can there exist
A reason to excuse Luccheni's action,
Of life's great right's most dastardly infraction?"

" Excuse it, no!" I said; " nor justify it;
But understand it, yes!—I find confusion
In both your questions; and, your words imply it,
They have their base in popular illusion.
In Socialism and Anarchism, deny it
Who will, there's no imperative inclusion
Of violence. Each, aiming at reform,
Would lay life's ever-raging life and storm."

The growth of the Socialist and Suffragist movements has led to a great increase in this kind of argumentative verse; but the bad poems in the Conservative or Militarist interests are generally very much worse, a type-specimen being this:

And so with foes about us
Just waiting for their chance
We must become a nation armed
Like Germany and France.

Another example of Imperialist verse is:

I'm old John Bull of England,
My triumphs are in song,

I've fought and won great victories
Which did not take me long.

I've fought in many a battle
By sea as well as land.
I've fought in Russia, Belgium,
Africa and India's golden strand,

which occurs in a work appealing for better treatment for British Honduras.

But most of the best bad verse is not propagandist. Amongst the classics of the kind the Works of Johnston-Smith rank high. These have been published complete in one volume, but the best of them are to be found in a smaller book entitled *The Captain of the Dolphin*. Mr. Johnston-Smith had a great vocabulary and peculiar gifts of metaphor and of abrupt conclusion. Here are some typical passages:

A balminess the darkened hours had brought from out
the South,
Each breaker doffed its cap of white and shut its
blatant mouth.

Strike, strike your flag, Sidonia,
And lessen death and pain;
"Strike," "Fight" are but synonyma
For misery to Spain.

On speedy wing the graceful sea-fowl follow fast—
They seem to me the souls of seamen drowned,
Who have for sailors, ships and ocean's briny blast
Dumb love which they are yearning to propound.

O'er the sea's edge the sun, a dazzling disc,
In splendour hangs, preparing for his plunge;
Upon the heaven's bright page he stamps an asterisk
Of yellow beams which Western things expunge.

Reluctant I leave, like a lover who goes
From the side of the maid of his choice,
By whom he is held with a cord actuose
Spun out of her beauty and voice.

"Actuose" is very characteristic of this poet, who uses enormous numbers of astonishing words of which he does not tell us the meaning, although he gives us a glossary containing such definitions as:

Derelict—An abandoned ship.
Outward-bound—Sailing from home.
Yo-heave-ho!—A phrase used by sailors when two or more pull in concert at the same rope.

One of his nicest surprises is the ending of:

Where the sun circles round for the half of the year
And is cold—like a yellow balloon.

The kind of thrill produced by this unexpected ending is, of course, common in verse. Some readers will be acquainted with the epitaph:

Here beneath this stone at rest
Lies the dear dog who loved us best.
Within his heart was nothing mean,
He seemed just like a human being.

But a University poet's anticlimax on Actæon may not be so generally known:

His hands were changed to feet, and he in short
Became a stag. . . .

Nor this affecting stanza from a woman's book recently published:

What o' the wind?
It hisses through a vessel's spars.
What o' the wind?
It is in truth to mercy blind,
It surely from all rest debars,
And even frights the sturdy "tars."
What o' the wind?

An equal bathos is sometimes produced by inappropriate metaphor. The worst instance I know is found in the poems of quite a well-known writer who describes roses:

Aft before and fore behind
Swung upon the summer wind.

But the author of a recent drama of the Near East came pretty near it with:

. . . the diamond shaft of the fierce searchlight
From the lens of the crystal moon.

The chase after the unusual almost always means disaster. This is another recent example:

I have found thee, dear! on the edge of time,
Just over the brink of the world of sense;
In dream-life that's ours, when with love intense
We function above, in a fairer clime.

I have found thee there, in a world of rest,
In the fair sweet gardens of sunlit bliss,
Where the sibilant sound of an Angel's kiss
Is the sanctioned seal of a Holy quest.

But nothing produced in this manner is so attractive as the merely commonplace can be when carried to its farthest pitch. A year or two ago a young

American published a volume with a preface ending: "He was apprised of the death of his invalid brother, whose remaining portion of his grandfather's legacy accruing to him facilitated the publication of this book." The epilogue ran as follows:

> Oh, the rain, rain, rain!
> All the day it doth complain.
> On the window-pane, just near me,
> How it sputters, oh, how dreary!
> One becomes so awful weary
> With the rain, rain, rain.

The difference between this and Verlaine's *Il pleut sur la ville* would be hard to define, but there certainly is a marked difference.

Most of the poets quoted above have, at any rate, the gift of moving with some freedom within their metres. But some people who publish verse cannot even do that, however simple the forms they choose. They struggle through their poems like flies in treacle. A good example may be taken from a book (excellently produced) issued only a year ago by one of the foremost publishers. Apart from its other qualities, it shows a most extraordinarily revolutionary conception of the way in which lines may be ended:

> A man's home is a woman's breast. There see
> Him in infancy, and later, seeks he
> Inspiration from the self-same source. 'Tis
> His home, t'wards which, from cradle to the grave,
> He doth gravitate, accomplishing his
> Greatest work by aid of it. Man on the
> Woman's aid depends. Oft unconsciously
> 'Tis given, oft loyally the truth's in
> Loving breast safeguarded—less often 'tis
> In cruelty withheld.

This supplies the only case I know of in which the article "the" has been used as a rhyme. But for sheer struggle the poem does not excel parts of this other one, which was published in a recent anthology:

Along a marsh a hungry crane
With patient steps, his way did take
Each cranny of the rivage fain
To ransack with his slender beak,

When, suddenly, his watchful eye,
At but four paces distance, saw
A worm, that back, as suddenly,
To his subterranean hole did draw.

Nathless the crane did, straight, begin
His beak, and claw, alike, to ply
And hoping the retreat he, in
The end, of the insect might destroy.

The turf did tear up, and dispel
The clods, and with such vigour strive
That he, at last, perceives his bill
At of the cave the depth arrive;

But lo! just when of all his toil,
The object he was nigh to get,
Beneath his very nib, a mole,
Without ado, devoured it!

Thus often, lurchers, onward who
Are prone by shady ways to creep
May the reward to those that's due
Who, openly, have acted, reap.

This fable is called by the author *A Surreptitious Catch;* but it might equally fitly have been entitled *The Apotheosis of the Comma.*

I have, as I say, insufficient scientific talent to enter upon an analytic criticism of this kind of poetry; and in this brief discourse I have done little more than string quotations together. But that operation is all that is needed to serve my present object—viz., the propagation of the cult. Any one who has ever read the novels of Mrs. Amanda M'Kittrick Ros knows how much sustenance the human spirit may derive from the byways of literature; but it is very rarely that one meets, even amongst the best-read of men, one who is conscious of the peculiar poetic treasures that lie about in the publishers' offices and on the second-hand bookstalls simply imploring to be collected.

MORE BADNESS

My appeal for interesting specimens of bad verse has brought me a large mass of material; but most of my correspondents seem not to realize that merely feeble and meaningless verse is so common as not to be worth preserving. The best single line I have received—sent me by a notorious dramatist who has forgotten its place of origin—is:

The beetle booms adown the glooms and bumps
among the clumps;

and what promised to be the best whole poem is one that begins by rhyming "Atlantic" to "blanket." But when I had got through it I found that my correspondent had got it out of a visitors' book in an hotel. I really cannot count anything that has not been properly published; although I confess to being tempted by such lines as:

Farewell, farewell, bonny St. Ives,
May I live to see you again,
Your air preserves people's lives
And you have so little rain.

So really the best acquisition I have made is the following, which is quoted by Mr. E. V. Lucas from the Rev. Cornelius Whur:

In this imperfect, gloomy scene
Of complicated ill,
How rarely is a day serene,
The throbbing bosom still!

Will not a beauteous landscape bright
Or music's soothing sound,
Console the heart, afford delight,
And throw sweet peace around?
They may; but never comfort lend
Like an accomplished female friend!

With such a friend the social hour
In sweetest pleasure glides;
There is, in female charms a power
Which lastingly abides;
The fragrance of the blushing rose,
Its tints and splendid hue,
Will, with the seasons, decompose,
And pass as flitting dew;
On firmer ties his joys depend
Who has a faithful female friend!

As orbs revolve, and years recede
And seasons onward roll,
The fancy may on beauties feed
With discontented soul;
A thousand objects bright and fair
May for a moment shine,
Yet many a sigh and many a tear
But mark their swift decline;
While lasting joys the man attend
Who has a polished female friend!

One interesting thing I should like to trace is a metrical version of Holy Writ containing such lines as these on Jonah:

Three dreadful days beneath the deep,
In fish's belly dark lay he.
How terrible methinks his fate.
May no such torment fall on me,

The most ingenious writer who contributes the "Observator" column to the *Observer* offers me a couple of specimens, one of which is new to me. The old one is the late Mr. Alfred Austin's remark about Nature:

> She sins upon a larger scale
> Because she is herself more large.

And the other, a touching narrative of a gipsy woman who fell ill, was a discovery of Andrew Lang's:

> There we leave her,
> There we leave her,
> Far from where her swarthy kindred roam,
> In the Scarlet Fever,
> Scarlet Fever,
> Scarlet Fever Convalescent Home.

"THE CATTLE OF THE BOYNE"

I HAVE referred before to the frequency of misprints in the penny *Times*. It does seem a pity that the conductors of the paper cannot keep it up to its old traditions in this respect. Last week there was a more curious instance than usual. These words appeared:

> "The anniversary of the Cattle of the Boyne was celebrated with unusual enthusiasm throughout Canada."

I was so moved by the report of these zoological novelties that I made a little poem about them, full of Celtic twilight. It runs thus:

THE SANDS OF BOYNE

Och, Geoffrey, go and call the Cattle home,
And call the Cattle home,
And call the Cattle home,
Acrost the sands of Boyne.
Shure, ye're the bhoy that's got inured to foam,
So come, bring in the koine.

Och, are they fish, flesh, fowl, or good red herrings
Perhaps they are red herrings,
Forlorn and wildered herrings,
Strayed from their native broine,
This hapless party which has lost its bearings
Fornint the sands of Boyne.

No, no, they have no herring for their father.
The proof-reader's their father,
A most prolific father
By mishap or desoign.
If this is what wan penny means, I'd rather
Stump up the ancient coin

Than daily find—Och tempora, Och *Times !*—
Bad grammar in my *Times*
And misprints in my *Times*
In ivry other loine,
Capped by this worst of typographic crimes
" The CATTLE of the Boyne " !

But perhaps one ought not really to complain of misprints, even in the *Times*, when they are funny.

MOVING A LIBRARY

I DO not remember that any of our meditative essayists has written on the subject of Moving One's Books. If such an essay exists I should be glad to go to it for sympathy and consolation. For I have just moved from one room to another, in which I devoutly hope that I shall end my days, though (as Mr. Asquith would put it in his rounded way) "at a later, rather than at an earlier, date." Night after night I have spent carting down two flights of stairs more books than I ever thought I possessed. Journey after journey, as monotonously regular as the progresses of a train round the Inner Circle: upstairs empty-handed, and downstairs creeping with a decrepit crouch, a tall, crazy, dangerously bulging column of books wedged between my two hands and the indomitable point of my chin. The job simply has to be done; once it is started there is no escape from it; but at times during the process one hates books as the slaves who built the pyramids must have hated public monuments. A strong and bitter book-sickness floods one's soul. How ignominious to be strapped to this ponderous mass of paper, print, and dead men's sentiments! Would it not be better, finer, braver, to leave the rubbish where it lies and walk out into the world a free, untrammelled, illiterate Superman? Civilization! Pah! But that mood is, I am happy to say, with me ephemeral. It is generated by the necessity for tedious physical exertion and dies with the need. Nevertheless the actual transport is about the briefest and least harassing of the operations called for. Dusting (or "buffeting the books," as Dr. Johnson called it) is a matter of choice.

One can easily say to oneself, "These books were banged six months ago" (knowing full well that it was really twelve months ago), and thus decide to postpone the ceremony until everything else has been settled. But the complications of getting one's library straight are still appalling.

Of course, if your shelves are moved bodily it is all right. You can take the books out, lay them on the floor in due order, and restore them to their old places. But otherwise, if you have any sense of congruity and proportion, you are in for a bad time. My own case could not be worse than it is. The room from which I have been expelled was low and square; the room into which I have been driven is high and L-shaped. None of my old wall-shelves will fit my new walls; and I have had to erect new ones, more numerous than the old and totally different in shape and arrangement. It is quite impossible to preserve the old plan; but the devisal of another one brings sweat to the brow. If one happened to be a person who never desired to refer to his books the obvious thing to do would be to put the large books into the large shelves and the small ones into the small shelves and then go and smoke a self-satisfied pipe against the nearest post. But to a man who prefers to know where every book is, and who possesses, moreover, a sense of System and wishes everything to be in surroundings proper to its own qualities, this is not possible. Even an unsystematic man must choose to add a classification by subject to the compulsory classification by size; and, in my case, there is an added difficulty produced by a strong hankering for some sort of chronological order. There is nothing like that for easy reference. If you know that Beowulf will be at the left-hand end of the shelf that he fits and Julia Ward, the Sweet Singer of Michigan, at the right-hand end, you save yourself a good deal of time. But when your new compartments do not

fit your old sections, when the large books of Stodge are so numerous as to insist upon intruding into the shelves reserved for large books of Pure Literature, and the duodecimos of Foreign Verse surge in a tidal wave over the preserves of the small books on Free Trade, Ethics, and Palæontology, one is reduced to the verge of despair. That is where I am at this moment; sitting in the midst of a large floor covered with sawdust, white distemper, nails, tobacco-ash, burnt matches, and the Greatest Works of the World's Greatest Masters. Fortunately, in Ruskin's words, "I don't suppose I shall do it again for months and months and months."

A HORRIBLE BOOKSELLER

People often complain that booksellers know too little about the goods they sell. If only, the argument is, books were sold by men of taste, familiar with their contents, the public would buy more good literature: as things are, the blind bookseller leads the blind customer. There is something in this. An educated bookseller can actually educate other people. Many intelligent young persons reach the age of twenty-one without having met a single person with the habit of good reading, and do not "get on to" literature because it has never been suggested to them that they will like it. Booksellers may act as teachers. There are booksellers, though not many, who make a practice of "nursing" promising young customers, gradually cultivating their taste until they become confirmed book-buyers. One might say, in fact, that in a perfect world (from the book-buyer's point of view) the dealers in new books would know everything about books, and the dealers in old books would know nothing whatever about them. The point of this last subsection is obvious, but the other day I had an experience that greatly fortified my view. I had often met the second-hand bookseller whose learning prevented one from buying anything cheap from him; I have now encountered one whose interest in his subject prevented one from buying anything at all.

He was not so much a really learned man as a man with what is called "an inexhaustible fund of information." It is quite possible that if he had had a real rarity in his shop he would have known nothing about it. But about the promiscuity of his reading

there was no doubt. When I entered the shop he was seated at a table absorbing something that looked as if it might be the Travels of Livingstone or Speke. His spectacles were on his forehead, his elbows on the table, his hands in his hair; and his beard almost touched his book. "Do you mind if I go through?" I said. "Sairtainly," he said, betraying his origin. "And what may you be interested in?" "Oh . . . books," I replied vaguely. "That is a verra conseederable category," he observed. Was it poetry I liked? he went on. I murmured "Yes," and he led me to the place where he kept it. But before I had got my fingers on a book he made it evident that it was he and not I that was going to have the "look round." Here, for example, was a volume of Kirke White. Had I ever read him? How wonderful was that hymn (quoted at length) of his! What a career! He was a butcher's son and a lawyer's clerk. He had a gift for mathematics, and they gave him a sizarship at Cambridge. He would have been one of the greatest figures in English literature had he lived. Was I interested in Italian books? Well, then, perhaps I would like a good copy of (!!!) *I Promessi Sposi.* It was extraordinary the number of copies of that book which must have been printed. But there was no supply without a demand.

I tried in vain to check the torrent with some sort of remark which, though polite, might, nevertheless, have an air of finality. It was no good. My fingers never got beyond touching the back of a book before he had taken down another, pulled me round, and fixed me with a glittering eye for which the Ancient Mariner himself would have been tempted to offer a large sum. Godwin, now. Did I like *Caleb Williams?* Yes, of course! But had I read his History of England? It was by way of being a reply to Clarendon. Clarendon was a great writer. But he was not impartial. And the worst of it was that

he seemed to be impartial when he was most unfair. When he was sacrificing everything for his King he little thought how his loyalty would be rewarded. He was too moral for Charles II.; but, what was worse, he kept the purse-strings too tight. He would not give him money for one of his mistresses. Was it Barbara Palmer? No, it was not Barbara Palmer, and it was not Nelly Gwyn. At any rate, it was one of them. And when, in the end, the grant was made to her, she died before she got the money!

This appeared to amuse the old man. When he had laughed himself out, it was to resume with some work, dated 1784, which contained a recipe for making a Prime Minister: the chief ingredients being hypocrisy, mendacity, corruption, and cant. This opened up a large field of speculation. Who was Premier in 1784? Why, of course, it was young Billy Pitt! ("Yes," I said.) No, it was Rockingham. ("Yes," I said.) No, it wasn't; it was Bute. So it proceeded. I spent, in all, two hours in that shop; in the course of which time I had stolen glances at about six worthless books. For all I know it was as full of gems of purest ray serene as are the dark unfathomed caves of ocean. I left without making a single purchase, and the proprietor seemed quite hurt at this unfriendly response to his attentions. How that old man earns his living I don't know. I think he must have private means. But in future I shall have a warmer feeling then ever for the sort of red-nosed second-hand bookseller, now, unfortunately, not very common, who knows only the outsides of books, and who sits smoking on a heap of rubbish in the corner of his shop with the air of a tramp resting on a roadside pile of stones.

CHARLES II. IN ENGLISH VERSE

I WAS talking to a man the other day about books that ought to have been written and have not been, when it occurred to me that somebody might publish a very amusing selection of panegyrics written on undeserving persons: say, the less immaculate of the English kings. I at once thought of writing a life of Charles II., each chapter of which should be headed by an extract from some contemporary poem about him. The contrast between the character and private and public actions of this monarch and the descriptions of him by literary eulogists would have been illuminating. Gross flattery was the habit of the time. James the First was given, very unfairly as I think, the title of the British Solomon; and the Royal Martyr, who after all had some virtues very highly developed, was written of in terms which would have been extreme if applied to St. Francis of Assisi. But no one, not even his father, received such whole-hearted praises as Charles II.

His career as a recipient of them began early. When he was a child Francis Quarles's *Divine Fancies* were dedicated to him. The Dedication was headed: "To the Royal Bud of Majesty and Centre of our Hopes and Happiness, Charles," and began: "Illustrious Infant, Give me leave to acknowledge myself thy servant, ere thou knowest thyself my Prince." The hope is held out that the illustrious infant will become "a most incomparable Prince, the firm pillar of our happiness and the future object of the world's wonder." Addressing then the boy's governess, Lady Dorset, Quarles becomes even more rhapsodical:

"Most excellent Lady,

"You are the Star which stands over the Place where the Babe lies. By whose directions' light, I come from the East to present my Myrrh and Frankincense to the young child. Let not our Royal Joseph nor his princely Mary be afraid; there are no Herods here. We have all seen his Star in the East, and have rejoyced: our loyall hearts are full; for our eyes have seen him, in whom our Posterity shall be blessed."

One could scarcely hope that Quarles's successors would quite live up to that.

Dryden's poem on Charles's return to England is pitched a little lower. It certainly contains lines like;

> The winds that never moderation knew,
> Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew;
> Or out of breath with joy would not enlarge
> Their straightened lungs . . .

but that is a mere excess of avowed fancy. When he wrote his *Threnodia Augustalis* on Charles's death, Dryden decidedly went one better. Perhaps it was that he had had twenty-five years of Charles's reign in which to appreciate fully the King's reverend qualities. He calls him

> That all-forgiving King
> The type of Him above,
> That unexhausted spring
> Of clemency and love.

He apostrophizes the Muse of History:

> Be true, O Clio, to thy hero's name!
> But draw him strictly so
> That all who view the piece may know;
> He needs no trappings of fictitious fame,
> The load's too weighty.

The anguished poet almost blasphemes against heaven for taking away so peerless a sovereign; until he remembers that "saints and angels" had been done out of Charles's company for so long that their turn might fairly be considered to have come. And there is the further consolation that a James has succeeded a Charles:

Our Atlas fell indeed, but Hercules was near;

or, as the Earl of Halifax put it,

James is our Charles in all things else but name.

Which Charles himself at least knew to be untrue.

The Halifax extract comes out of another funeral poem On the Death of His Most Sacred Majesty. "Farewell," he cries,

great Charles, monarch of blest renown,
The best good man that ever fill'd a throne.

He sketches Charles's career. He compares his exile to the banishment of David (an open crib from *Astræa Redux*) and says of England that, when he came back,

to his arms she fled
And rested on his shoulders her fair bending head.

He "Us from our foes and from ourselves did save." Only the almost inevitable comparison to the Almighty can do him justice:

In Charles so good a man and King we see
A double image of the deity.
Oh! had he more resembled it! Oh, why
Was he not still more like, and could not die?

What did become of Charles is suggested by "the Lord R." in a poem which appears in *Miscellany Poems:*

> Good kings are number'd with Immortal Gods
> When hence translated to the best Abodes,
> For Princes (truly great) can never die,
> They only lay aside Mortality.

After which we are told that the deceased is in Olympus passing the nectar round; an occupation that should have suited him very well.

Perhaps the suggestion will be adopted. Let some publisher with a series of anthologies get somebody to compile The Hundred Most Fulsome Poems in the English Language. It would be a more entertaining book than most. Very few examples, I think, would be drawn from the last hundred years. As respects the monarchs, Great Elizabeth, the Great Jameses, the Great Charleses, Great William, Great Anne, and the Great Georges all got their full share of adulation. The break comes, I think, with George IV.; since whose accession we have lost the habit. Any one who should address his sovereign to-day in words like those addressed to Charles II. by his subjects (*e.g.*, Great George, the planets tremble at thy nod) would be suspected of pulling the sovereign's leg.

TENNESSEE

LETTERS from strangers can usually be accounted for. But why on earth I, more than any one else, should have received a letter from America asking me to contribute towards the re-establishment of a backwoods library I don't know. This, however, has been my experience, and I trust that I am not endangering the Anglo-Saxon Entente by relieving my feelings in the following:

LINES

Written on receiving from the Librarian of a College which educates "the mountain youth of Tennessee" a request for "a book" to assist in the re-formation of the Library, which was recently destroyed by fire.

Mine ears have heard your distant moan
O mountain youth of Tennessee;
Even the bowels of a stone
Would melt at your librarian's plea.
Although we're parted by the ocean,
I'm most distressed about your fire:
Only I haven't any notion
What sort of volume you require.

I have a Greene, a Browne, a Gray,
A Gilbert White, a William Black,
Trollope and Lovelace, Swift and Gay,
And Hunt and Synge: nor do I lack
More sober folks for whom out there
There may be rather better scope,
Three worthy men of reverend air,
A Donne, a Prior, and a Pope.

Peacock or Lamb, discreetly taken,
Might fill the hungry mountain belly,
Or Hogg or Suckling, Crabbe or Bacon
(Bacon's not Shakespeare, Crabbe is Shelley)
And if—for this is on the cards—
You do not like this mental food,
I might remit less inward bards:
My well-worn Spencer or my Hood.

Longfellows may be in your line
(Littles we know are second-raters),
Or one might speed across the brine
A Mayflower full of Pilgrim Paters.
Or, then again, you may devote
Yourselves to less æsthetic lore,
Yet if I send you out a Grote [1]
For all I know you'll ask for More.

O thus proceeds my vacillation:
For now the obvious thought returns
That after such a conflagration
A fitting sequel might be Burns.
And now again I change my mind
And, almost confidently, feel
That since to Beg you are inclined
You might like Borrow, say, or Steele. . . .

Envoi

Yes, Prince, this song shall have an end,
A sudden thought has come to me—
The thing is settled: I shall send
A Tennyson to Tennessee!

[1] Or, with an appearance of greater generosity, one might return them the Pound they sent us some years since.

THE HISTORY OF EARL PUMBLES

"THE late Earl (Eorl?) Pumbles was of lowly birth. He was born in the thorp of Stoke Parva in 1850, the son of a penniless timber-wright. Outdriven from his first school, he became a fighting-man. He was a dreadless and fearnought wight, and was once left for dead on the field, bleeding at every sweat-hole. The saw-bones brought him through. Coming back to England he saw the haplihood of making a gold-hoard in the soap-trade. He set up a business with the gold of others; got rid of his yoke-mates by sundry underslinkings, and soon became amazingly wealthy. An earldom followed; though it is mark-worthy that on the morning after its bestowal a great songsmith wrote to the *Daily Score* to say: 'The Gusher of Fair-Name is befouled.' In 1910 Lord Pumbles went as sendling to the King of Siam, with a bodeword from our King. In the back-end of the next year his health gave out; he became bit-wise worse; and he died last night of belly-ache. Lord Pumbles was often to be seen at Sir Henry Wood's Out-Road Glee-Motes at Queen's Hall, but he was almost a comeling at the House of Lords. He was cunning in Kin-lore, and in his fair wonestead at Pumbles wrote a great book on the stem-tree of his kin. By ill-hap he was an eat-all and rather soak-some. He will be buried on Wednesday in the bone-yard at Pumbles, in which lich-rest his wife already lies. The earldom goes, by out-of-the-way odd-come-short, to his daughter."

This little biography may have puzzled those who have got thus far. They may have thought it absurd. I compiled it with the help of "C. L. D.'s"

Word-Book of the English Tongue, published by Routledge. "C. L. D." (the initials are, I observe, those of the author of *Alice in Wonderland*) is one of those enthusiasts who long "to shake off the Norman yoke" which lies so heavy on our speech. He follows, that is to say, in the footsteps of the late Rev. William Barnes (of Dorset), who asked his countrymen to call a perambulator a "child-wain" and an omnibus a "folk-wain." "What many speakers and writers," he remarks, "even to-day, call English, is no English at all but sheer French. Nevertheless, there are many who feel not a little ashamed of the needless loan-words in which their speech is clothed, and of the borrowed feathers in which they strut. Over and over again it has been said, and most truly, that for liveliness and strength, manliness and fulness of meaning, the olden English Tongue were hard to beat." "In this little Word-Book, therefore" he says:

> "after having chosen a few thousand stock loan-words, I have striven to set by the side of each, not indeed 'synonyms,' but other good English words, which may stand in their stead."

Which is certainly (or, I think I should say, "ywis" or "in good sooth") a pure English sentence.

One primary fault "C. L. D." avoids almost entirely. He does not (as he might have done had he cared to take all the astonishing Latin words from Johnson's Word-Book) load the dice by including in his list of "loan-words" words which we hardly ever use. There are a few. Only a scientist would say "acephalous" when he meant "headless"; and the general public does not need to be warned to say "grind," "bristly," "stalkless," and "barefooted," instead of "comminute," "aristate," "acaulescent," and "discalced." It would never dream of saying

acaulescent. Where our author errs is where he would inevitably err: in suggesting to us (1) Saxon words which we simply won't use, and (2) Saxon words which do not take the place of the Latin words of which he disapproves. Take, for instance, as an instance of the latter category, this very word "disapprove." All he can give us is a list of "strong" words beginning with "hiss" and "hoot," none of which gets the exact shade of meaning required. Similarly with "decry," for which his suggestions are "boo" and "hoot." In suggesting "clean," "flat," etc., for "absolute" he is merely booing and hooting the slang use of that word, but he has not found a Saxon equivalent for the real "absolute." For "complimentary" he gives "smooth-spoken"; but how would, say, the Archbishop of Canterbury like to get a letter of thanks beginning: "My dear Archbishop,—Many thanks for your very smooth-spoken remarks"? For "uncomfortable" he can only suggest "writhing"—as though we could say that we had spent a fortnight in a most writhing hotel; and for "temporalities" he has nothing but "loaves and fishes"—which is simply offensive. If one began using words like these promiscuously, one would simply (here I consult the *Word-Book* again) be asking for misluck.

To turn to the other lot, it is altogether too late to ask us to say "rede-craft" for "logic"; "backjaw" for "retort"; "handmaid" for "servant"; "outganger" for "emigrant"; "wanhope" (a most beautiful word, I admit) for "despair"; "scald" or "songsmith" for "poet"; "hight" or "yclept" for "denominated"; "uplooking" for "aspiring"; "fourwinkled" for "quadrangular"; and, above all, to replace "depilatory" by "hairbane." "Ereold" and "foreold" for "ancient" are no longer possible; and the man who should say that the King was crowned and besmeared in Westminster Abbey would

be quite unable to persuade people that he wasn't merely a rather coarse satirist. In cases where both terms are alive, the Latin is often more convenient—because shorter—than the Saxon. If we always used "breach of wedlock" instead of "adultery," many modern novels, and most Sunday newspapers, would use up twice as much paper and ink. (There was once a half-way word: the mediæval heralds used to say that the leopard was "begotten in spouse-breach between the lion and the pard.") In proposing "hand-grip" for portmanteau, our wordloresman is doing an audacious thing: adopting a bit of modern American—though, as often as not, the term is shortened, across the water, to "grip" *tout court.*

There remain, of course, a very large number of words for which "C. L. D." does provide genuine living synonyms which, in many cases, are stronger and terser than the originals. Even here, of course, there are occasional difficulties; we have, at any rate in print, thrown over "C. L. D.'s" favourites "belly-ache" and "gripes" in favour of "colic" simply because they *are* what is called "good sturdy Saxon," altogether too apt and sturdy. As for his proposal of "ropes" and "manifolds" for "intestines," all I can say is that I much prefer here to remain under the Norman yoke. At the same time, too much Latinity is a nuisance and a danger to the vividness of our tongue; and, whilst refraining from following "C. L. D." to his thorps or Barnes to his folk-wain, I think I shall sometimes find the *Word-Book* useful.

ON DESTROYING BOOKS

"It says in the paper" that over two million volumes have been presented to the troops by the public. It would be interesting to inspect them. Most of them, no doubt, are quite ordinary and suitable; but it was publicly stated the other day that some people were sending the oddest things, such as magazines twenty years old, guides to the Lake District, Bradshaws, and back numbers of *Whitaker's Almanack*. In some cases, one imagines, such indigestibles get into the parcels by accident; but it is likely that there are those who jump at the opportunity of getting rid of books they don't want. Why have kept them if they don't want them? But most people, especially non-bookish people, are very reluctant to throw away anything that looks like a book. In the most illiterate houses that one knows every worthless or ephemeral volume that is bought finds its way to a shelf and stays there. In reality it is not merely absurd to keep rubbish merely because it is printed: it is positively a public duty to destroy it. Destruction not merely makes more room for new books and saves one's heirs the trouble of sorting out the rubbish or storing it: it may also prevent posterity from making a fool of itself. We may be sure that if we do not burn, sink, or blast all the superseded editions of Bradshaw, two hundred years hence some collector will be specializing in old railway time-tables, gathering, at immense cost, a complete series, and ultimately leaving his "treasures" (as the Press will call them) to a Public Institution.

But it is not always easy to destroy books. They

may not have as many lives as a cat, but they certainly die hard; and it is sometimes difficult to find a scaffold for them. This difficulty once brought me almost within the Shadow of the Rope. I was living in a small and (as Shakespeare would say) heaven-kissing flat in Chelsea, and books of inferior minor verse gradually accumulated there until at last I was faced with the alternative of either evicting the books or else leaving them in sole, undisturbed tenancy and taking rooms elsewhere for myself. Now, no one would have bought these books. I therefore had to throw them away or wipe them off the map altogether. But how? There were scores of them. I had no kitchen range, and I could not toast them on the gas-cooker or consume them leaf by leaf in my small study fire—for it is almost as hopeless to try to burn a book without opening it as to try to burn a piece of granite. I had no dust-bin; my debris went down a kind of flue behind the staircase, with small trap-doors opening to the landings. The difficulty with this was that the larger books might choke it; the authorities, in fact, had labelled it "Dust and Ashes Only"; and in any event I did not want to leave the books intact, and some dustman's unfortunate family to get a false idea of English poetry from them. So in the end I determined to do to them what so many people do to the kittens: tie them up and consign them to the river. I improvised a sack, stuffed the books into it, put it over my shoulder, and went down the stairs into the darkness.

It was nearly midnight as I stepped into the street. There was a cold nip in the air; the sky was full of stars; and the greenish-yellow lamps threw long gleams across the smooth, hard road. Few people were about; under the trees at the corner a Guardsman was bidding a robust good-night to his girl, and here and there rang out the steps of solitary travellers

making their way home across the bridge to Battersea. I turned up my overcoat collar, settled my sack comfortably across my shoulders, and strode off towards the little square glow of the coffee-stall which marked the near end of the bridge, whose sweeping iron girders were just visible against the dark sky behind. A few doors down I passed a policeman who was flashing his lantern on the catches of basement windows. He turned. I fancied he looked suspicious, and I trembled slightly. The thought occurred to me: "Perhaps he suspects I have swag in this sack." I was not seriously disturbed, as I knew that I could bear investigation, and that nobody would be suspected of having stolen such goods (though they *were* all first editions) as I was carrying. Nevertheless I could not help the slight unease which comes to all who are eyed suspiciously by the police, and to all who are detected in any deliberately furtive act, however harmless. He acquitted me, apparently; and, with a step that, making an effort, I prevented from growing more rapid, I walked on until I reached the Embankment.

It was then that all the implications of my act revealed themselves. I leaned against the parapet and looked down into the faintly luminous swirls of the river. Suddenly I heard a step near me; quite automatically I sprang back from the wall and began walking on with, I fervently hoped, an air of rumination and unconcern. The pedestrian came by me without looking at me. It was a tramp, who had other things to think about; and, calling myself an ass, I stopped again. "Now's for it," I thought; but just as I was preparing to cast my books upon the waters I heard another step—a slow and measured one. The next thought came like a blaze of terrible blue lightning across my brain: "What about the splash?" A man leaning at midnight over the Embankment wall: a sudden fling of his arms: a great

splash in the water. Surely, and not without reason, whoever was within sight and hearing (and there always seemed to be some one near) would at once rush at me and seize me. In all probability they would think it was a baby. What on earth would be the good of telling a London constable that I had come out into the cold and stolen down alone to the river to get rid of a pack of poetry? I could almost hear his gruff, sneering laugh: "You tell that to the Marines, my son!"

So for I do not know how long I strayed up and down, increasingly fearful of being watched, summoning up my courage to take the plunge and quailing from it at the last moment. At last I did it. In the middle of Chelsea Bridge there are projecting circular bays with seats in them. In an agony of decision I left the Embankment and hastened straight for the first of these. When I reached it I knelt on the seat. Looking over, I hesitated again. But I had reached the turning-point. "What!" I thought savagely, "under the resolute mask that you show your friends is there really a shrinking and contemptible coward? If you fail now, you must never hold your head up again. Anyhow, what if you *are* hanged for it? Good God! you worm, better men than you have gone to the gallows!" With the courage of despair I took a heave. The sack dropped sheer. A vast splash. Then silence fell again. No one came. I turned home; and as I walked I thought a little sadly of all those books falling into that cold torrent, settling slowly down through the pitchy dark, and subsiding at last on the ooze of the bottom, there to lie forlorn and forgotten whilst the unconscious world of men went on.

Horrible bad books, poor innocent books, you are lying there still; covered, perhaps, with mud by this time, with only a stray rag of your sacking sticking out of the slime into the opaque brown tides. Odes

to Diana, Sonnets to Ethel, Dramas on the Love of Lancelot, Stanzas on a First Glimpse of Venice, you lie there in a living death, and your fate is perhaps worse than you deserved. I was harsh with you. I am sorry I did it. But even if I had kept you, I will certainly say this: I should not have sent you to the soldiers.

THE DEATHS OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

Has anyone ever dared to explain how it was that most of the distinguished philosophers of antiquity met with unusual and even extraordinary deaths? Men of all professions (notably men attached to the profession of arms) often came to violent ends in those vigorous ages. The oratory of Cicero did not save him from the sword, and all the tragedies of Æschylus were of no avail against the eagle that chose his bald head as a stone on which to drop a massive tortoise. But the philosophers were marked out by the acrimonious gods in such a way as to make it seem probable that the celestial powers felt revengeful towards them. Olympus was irritated with these eavesdroppers and spies. They must be shown that the hold was well guarded and the garrison awake; that no stealth and no daring could ultimately save the mortal scout from the weapons of the sentinels. Thus it was that few of the philosophers met the normal deaths of men.

It is easy, if one cares, to confirm this by reference to those who have written of these philosophers; to Diogenes Laertius, to Valerius Maximus, to Horace and Pliny, and to the untiring Julius Lemprierius who synthesises them all. Very few are those who escaped some sudden and disastrous ejection from the world; so few that one cannot resist the conclusion that for these individuals there was some excuse or palliation that tempered the divine anger. So it was with Zeno the Stoic who died in his ninety-eighth year having never (previously) been ill in his life; so also with Theophrastus; though that Lesbian

Diderot scarcely deserved his preferential treatment. For, dying in the hundred and seventh year of his age, he ventured to complain of the shortness of life and of "the partiality of nature in granting longevity to the crow and the stag but not to man." But for most of them there was no clemency, and they died by murder, by suicide, or by the ferocity of the elements.

Great Archimedes, obsessed by his hydraulics, could not collect his thoughts sufficiently to reveal his identity to the invading soldier; he fell with Syracuse. Longinus at Palmyra similarly was carved up; he had massacred many another author in his critical days, if indeed he was himself and not another gentleman of the same name. Zeno the Eleatic was tortured to death by a tyrant; though, on the pretence of an important whisper, he contrived to bite off the tyrant's ear, and thus remove a portion of death's sting. Socrates was compelled to poison himself, and Seneca to commit auto-phlebotomy in his bath. The death of Epicurus was inexpressibly painful, and Plato expired in the act of writing something; which must have been agonising for him.

Chrysippus met the end he deserved. All his life he had made puns and quibbles of which a negro-minstrel corner-man would have been ashamed, and he died from excess of laughter caused by the spectacle of an ass eating figs from a silver platter. Stilpo (brazen enough to call himself a Stoic) deliberately got drunk when *in extremis*, so that the aspect of death might appear less terrible; and Chilo (one of the seven alleged wise men) succumbed to a fit of joy caused by his son's success at Olympia. Yet this has undeniable elements of a glorious, though unpleasantly sudden death. Make it Professor —— and the Antwerp Stadium and the gulf is most apparent; the utmost we can say is that Herbert Spencer knew the game of billiards and once went to see the Derby.

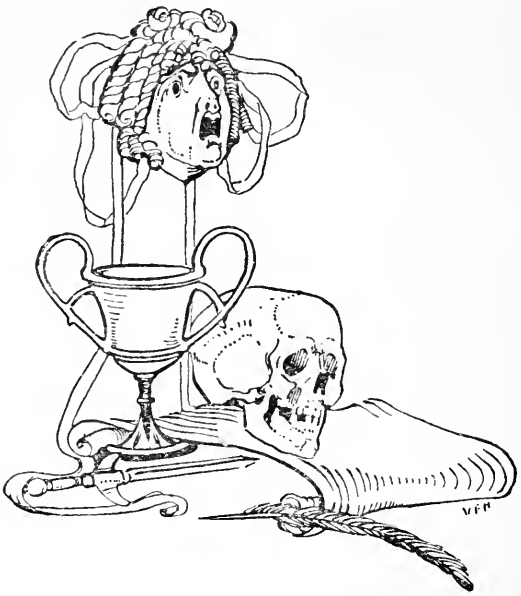
Ariston, like Æschylus, found his bald head the gateway of doom; though in this case the instrument of destiny was not a tortoise, but the sun. Drowned each one, as men suppose, were Protagoras, Archytas, Xenocrates and Aristotle. Of the first's demise we know no more; but Archytas found death in a shipwreck, Xenocrates, after one knows not what an evening, fell from his couch depositing his head in a basin of water, and the Stagirite, his industry thwarted at last, flung himself (it is reported) into the Euripus because he was unable to discover the cause of its flux and reflux.

The flames of Etna devoured the body of Empedocles. Polemon buried himself alive as a protest against persistent gout. As for Heraclitus, he who paraded his misanthropy and his egoism, the mode of his departure is uncertain. At least, it was one thing or the other. Either he was devoured by dogs—with the possible exception of the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet—or he perished on a dunghill whose warmth he had hoped would relieve the dropsy he had contracted from a foolish régime of fresh air and vegetarian diet.

Into the night go one and all; the goal is always the same, but the vehicles on the way vary in speed, in comfort, and in dignity. Philosophers nowadays do not die as they used to do, furious drivers on the Styx highroad. Like others they saunter. The gods no longer goad them; they do not drown themselves over insoluble problems or sit on unwholesome dunghills or harvest knowledge in beleaguered towns or laugh at masticating donkeys. They are treated like the rest of us and the manner of Professor ——'s death will be even as yours and mine. But whether this is because the gods have relented and repented their anger against the race of cosmic adventurers, or whether it is that they believe the danger to their secrets to have passed by and care not to dignify with

their hate the harmless and the mean, I have neither the desire nor the authority to say.

Perhaps, after all, there is merely a lull in the persecution of the philosophers. Next year or the year after Providence may again interpose to remind them of its existence and their own rashness. We may yet live to see a return to the old system of things. Professor Pott may kill himself in order to demonstrate the futility of Monism; dogs may eat Sir Murray Watt-Hoe; Dr. Junkermann may be choked by swallowing a fly, and a sudden thunderbolt may dispose of Principal Wilkins, F.R.S., author of that excellent little work *A Manual of Metaphysics*.



THE PAPERS THAT THERE ARE

I AM one of those who can never help reading any odd piece of printed paper which comes into their hands accidentally. For instance, odd sheets which shroud parcels sent by booksellers or publishers; fragments found amid the seaweed, straw, wood, bottles and corks on a beach; and pieces impaled by my stick when I am out walking. Such a piece of jetsam came my way the other day. I sent to the little shop at the corner for some loose cigarettes. They came back wrapped up in one page of a list sent out to newsagents by Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Ltd. (*anglice* Simpkins'), giving information as to the days on which various periodicals are obtainable. I began reading it, and I read it all through, with ever-increasing wonder.

The list, beginning quite regularly with periodicals obtainable on Monday morning, opened with *Great Thoughts*, truly an inspiring start. I have seen that journal; I associate it with the *Quiver* and the *Argosy*, which latter, I expect, is dead these many years. The *Light Car and Cycle Car* and several others lead to *Cassell's New* 1*d. Magazine* (which, most grossly paradoxical, is 2d.), and this is followed by:

Christian Novels	1½d.
Chums	1½d.
Comic Cuts	1½d.

Thirty-two in all are the Monday morning papers. They include *Girls' Mirror*, *Ladies' Companion*, *Lot o' Fun*, *Magnet*, *Picture Fun*, *Smart Novels*, *Competitors' Journal*, and *Young Ladies' Journal*. I

looked at all these names and meditated on the ignored continents which were opening out before my gaze. What is the *Magnet* and whom does it magnetise; what girls are reflected in that mirror, and to what ladies is that a companion? Who writes for these journals; what masterpieces are buried in them; what is their political influence; is it here that, in unsuspected ways, the real strength of the Coalition is developed and exercised? I had thought myself fairly familiar with the periodical Press, merely because I read Mr. Bottomley weekly, have frequently perused the *Pelican*, *Sporting Life*, the *London Mail* and the *National Review*, and, when going a train journey with children, invariably buy them the *Rainbow;* but the area of my knowledge is nothing to the area of my ignorance.

Tuesday morning, for some occult reason, is a great time for racing prints. The *Expert*, the *Judge*, the *Racing Outlook*, the *Racing World Special* and *Lotinga's Special* all rush out neck and neck. With them is the *Banner of Israel*, cheek by jowl with the *Big Comic and Sparks* and the *Butterfly*. The *Family Herald Supplement*, which many men joke about without ever having seen it and without being aware of its continued existence, is another from Tuesday's stable, and it is accompanied by several farming papers—*e.g.*, *Farm and Home—Handy Stories*, the *Marvel* (a green production containing, I assure you, highly remarkable school and detective stories), the *Mark Lane Express*, the *Wonder* and (these two come together) the *Times History of the War* and *Siftings*. What are *Siftings*, who are they? I don't know; yet, for all I can say to the contrary, in hundreds of thousands of British homes the day on which *Siftings* appears is the golden day of the week, and far into the night father, in his arm-chair, reads the tit-bits from it to the family until the flushed children have long overpassed their bedtime.

Tuesday afternoon's list is short and somewhat grim. It runs:

Boxing	2d.
Bystander	9d.
Casually List	3d. net.
Punch	6d.
Sketch	1s.
Tatler	1s.

But there is another big batch on Wednesday morning. *Building News* and *Contract Journal* both, inexplicably, prefer that morning, so does the *Jewish World*, so does a paper which appears, it would seem, on two kinds of paper and is catalogued as:

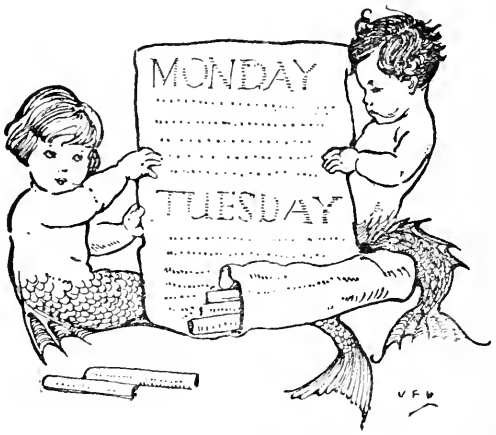
Life of Faith	2d.
,, ,, (thin)	2d.

the latter edition, presumably, being meant, if not for the backsliders, at least for the weaker brethren. The *Journal of Gaslighting* does not arouse in me the smallest flame, or jet, of curiosity; but I am slightly piqued by the *Gem* and *Hobbies*. The *National Food Journal*, being a most important institution, follows in large capitals, and then we come to Wednesday afternoon. It is ushered in by:

Gentlewoman	6d.
,, (thin)	6d.

It appears a low valuation, but Gentlewoman (thin) is certainly the acme of meagreness; far thinner, to all who have any sense of the flavour of words, than Lady (*thin*) would be. The *Mirror of Life* and a few trade journals bring us to that most prolific of periods, Thursday morning. On Thursday morning the adventurous newsagent can procure the *Encore*, the *Meat Trades Journal*, the *Performer*, the *Prim.*

Methodist Leader (how apt is that abbreviation !), the *Christian*, the *Cinema*, *Joyful News*, the *Tailor*, the *British Bee Journal*, *Merry and Bright*, the *Morning Star* and *Smart Fiction*. What a list to whet one's appetite ! But, alas ! it brought me to the end of the sheet. What comes out on Thursday afternoon, not to mention Friday and Saturday, must remain unknown to me, a question as dark as that of the song that the Sirens sang or what dress the hero wore when he lived amongst women. I should, had that other page come, have made doubtless more discoveries, and encountered more old friends whom I had presumed long dead. It may be that Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* is still alive, that the *Anti-Jacobin* still flourishes in some subterraneous way, that the *Rambler* and even *Mercurius Britannicus* may still be purchased, week by week, on Friday, or, perchance, on Saturday. And I might at last have tracked down a paper I have been looking for for years and that I am convinced exists; but I will not yet mention its name.



A FRIEND

I WAS talking, a week ago, to a collector of books, a veteran with a great collection. The talk turned, as it will on such occasions, to the irrecoverable good old days when a man with a small income could, granted knowledge and enthusiasm, form a collection full of rarities. The American millionaires had not come properly into the market. A hundred transatlantic universities were not forming libraries, scouring all the English catalogues, and giving booksellers the assurance of ever-rising prices for early books. Good quarto plays were still procurable for a few shillings when my interlocutor began; minor classics who are now names to conjure with in the salerooms were still unboomed; early volumes of verse were still scattered about of which almost every copy has now found its way to the shelves of some public institution never to emerge again, failing the end of our civilization in some ultra-Bolshevist revolution or an invasion from Mars. I was not quite so regretful as my friend. I found consolation in the fact that for every author who is put out of reach of the impecunious book collector, another author comes into his sphere of action. Fifty years ago you might pick up, or buy cheap in an auction room, a Herrick or a Lovelace, but the Caxtons were already expensive, and, for the most part, labelled and shelved. To-day, if the *Hesperides* costs £130, and there is small likelihood of unrecorded copies coming to light, the poor collector has only to move his attention a half-a-century forward and he may still discover Restoration and Queen Anne and Georgian rarities, purchasable in out-of-the-way shops for a few shillings; books some of which fetch their pounds in

the salerooms but which have not yet been hunted for with searchlights, as they will be when the last of the Carolines has found its way into a museum. And Victorian first editions are still lurking in plenty in the corners of provincial shops.

So did we put the best face on things and console ourselves for the fact that we could no longer, as Charles Lamb could do, find first editions of the *Anatomy* on barrows, or get a great folio of plays at the price of a new pair of shoes. We reminded ourselves of "A," who had recently got *Lamia* and *Endymion* for two shillings, and "B," who found Shelley's juvenile novels in the penny box at Wandsworth. But we had exaggerated even the difficulties of finding the earlier and more sought-after books. The collector of genius can still find them.

For I heard next day of a death; a life, short as lives go, and a friendship, old as friendships go, had ended. I will not mention his name here; it would not be known. He had published nothing. He had spent his working life learning, and the one manuscript he left complete was a modest bibliography of a college library. It will be published, and the little world of bibliographers will learn that a man, for his years rarely skilled in their lore, has died, and that in his maiden and modest research he made a few discoveries, in a narrow area, which generations of librarians had missed. And he had a genius for the collection of books.

His library was small as libraries are counted: a few hundreds of old volumes. But all of them he had "found." He united a wide knowledge which often enabled him to spot a book which to the ignorant bore no obvious clue to its nature, no obvious indication of its exceptional interest, with something which one could only call instinct, which often led him straight to the only shelf in a shop which contained anything worth looking at. I remember a

few things casually. On a barrow in the Whitechapel Road, the stock of which had all passed through the salerooms, he found a beautiful large black letter, a Pynson with the most delightful woodcuts, one of the most agreeable of early sixteenth century English books. Three times in as many months he found in three several shops, and purchased for a couple of shillings a piece, fine copies of another book which has scarcely ever come into the salerooms and which has fetched nearly £20 when it has done so. Here it was a question of his out-of-the-way knowledge—the book's value is under the surface—against the bookseller's lack of it. I have gone into a shop in Bloomsbury with him and seen him, in a languid, careless way, mount a ladder to a top shelf and bring down, with impassive face, three rare little black letter volumes of the Statutes (I think) of Henry VIII., one of which was not—at least in perfect condition—in the British Museum. If he went away for the week-end it was the normal thing to ask him when he came back whether he had found a book shop and what he had got there; the usual and expected answer being that he had dropped into one, or a furniture shop with a shelf of books, for five minutes, and bought (I give a few instances) the folios of Donne's Sermons, including the very rare third volume, for a matter of shillings, or a perfect Herbert, or a fine early North's *Plutarch*. He went to Dublin, and after a day or two I received from him a charming little incunable Claudian from Parma (he took but a passing friendly interest in early foreign printing) for which he had given half-a-crown; and from under the noses of the most respectable and knowing booksellers of Oxford and Cambridge he bore off, for next to nothing, volumes for which I am certain I should have had to pay, or to decline to pay, pounds. The most churlish, secretive and suspicious of booksellers would, at first sight, allow him into their hidden

stores and cellars, where he would (his hand usually flying to the right thing spontaneously) unearth books stowed away and forgotten thirty years ago. As it happened none of the greatest and most valuable books came his way during the few years of his hobby; but one always felt he was "liable" to secure even the proverbial Mazarin Bible or a First Folio. He made one feel that rare books were as common as blackberries.

He was not a recluse, or an eccentric, or a stooping bookworm. He did not see life through books; until his last illness he did his job, pulled his oar, drank his bottle, looked at the earth and the sky. The pursuit of the odd and scarce book, of the false collation, the printer's error, the unknown edition, the fragment at the binding's back, were an amusement in health and a consolation in sickness; done with thoroughness and immense enjoyment, but not taken more seriously than they should be. But he liked books. He spent a great deal of his leisure on them. He read catalogues at breakfast, rectified entries in works of reference at lunch, usually carried something in vellum or old calf wherever he went; and had a life of moneyed ease been his lot he would have found his chief occupation in the discovery, examination and proper arrangement of our old poets. With such toys do we amuse ourselves during our brief passage between birth and death, knowing that the shadow is over us and that we can take nothing to the grave. And, for so we are made, I think that even at the last, when life in retrospect seemed no longer than a day, and the door into dark mystery was open wide, he would, looking back for the last time, have wished, if it were possible, that some memory of his brief researches among books should be preserved, and that a friend should commemorate him in no other way than this.

AN UNOPENED LETTER

A TIME comes, as all husbands know, when litter simply has to be cleared away. Beyond a point excess is no longer tolerated; the last drawer was badly needed for something else, and it is intolerable that all the most useful boxes and baskets should be packed with papers which have never even been reconsidered, much less sorted and arranged. Well enough to keep, in a tidy manner, what you really want to keep; but it is intolerable to scatter the whole house with dumps of paper put down promiscuously, and most of them of no earthly interest to any one. "For heaven's sake," says a voice, to which conscience can find no valid answer, "at least go through them and get some sort of order into them. I'm certain you'll find most of them to be utter rubbish."

Last week the familiar sentences were addressed to myself, and this time with effect. I had long been convinced, and was now at last moved to action. There is nothing like doing things thoroughly. "I will bring out the lot, look at them all, and classify what I shall keep," I said. So next morning I went off to one of those fascinating shops where they keep Dumb Secretaries, Card Indexes, Roll-Top Desks, Duplicators, and a miscellany of other engaging constructions in cardboard, lacquered metal, and varnished wood. There did I buy no fewer than thirty-six large blue boxes with labels on them: I might as well, I thought, provide for the future while I was about it. A powerful lorry arrived with them in the evening, and, with an expanse of clear carpet before me, I tumbled out the first batch of written and printed sheets and began, with the emotions of one

who has unwillingly contracted himself to walk across the Himalayas, to distribute this kind of document on the table, that kind on the desk, all sorts, including every bill, into a refuse heap, and letters which looked interesting into twenty-four little areas on the floor—for I did not suppose that I could ever have corresponded with any one whose name began with X or Z—a supposition which has been found correct, not even Q having put in an appearance. Several hours seemed to make no difference; but a whole Saturday and Sunday served to reduce the tide in the first chest of drawers, and produced a vast slag heap along one side of the room. Later in the week I was halfway through and going strong, having mastered the technique of rapid inspection and distribution, when I was suddenly held up. I had picked up, on the top of a handful, an envelope which had never been opened, the only one of all those thousands which was in that state: a letter that had never been opened and read. There stuck up at the corner a triangle of paper, the corner had just been ripped with a pencil or my little finger, and the process had not been completed. Perhaps I had peeped in, and, finding what I expected, thrown the letter aside, having received a duplicate or met the writer during the day and been told it didn't matter. Perhaps I had been interrupted by an unexpected caller and dropped it with a heap of papers which were, later, crammed together, without discrimination, into a drawer. I don't know; I have no memory of it. But, this week, when I recovered the letter, I recognised with a sudden acuteness the handwriting, which an hour or two since, I had seen on other letters. "Is it?" whispered a voice in my brain. My heart went quicker, for I knew it was. I held the envelope, still hard and white, in my hand for a minute while my thoughts raced back. After so long I felt a queer reluctance to complete the unfinished operation, as though there were a sort of

profanity in it, as though to do it were to violate a little sanctuary. A little wave of sentimentalism and hyper-sensitiveness. It passed, and I tore the envelope open.

There it was: a letter from Rupert Brooke, eleven years old and never looked at before. He said nothing much, a few casual, hurried sentences: and he enclosed part of the proofs of his first book which appeared some weeks later. So there were the proofs, too, miraculously unsoiled, in an uncanny preservation, unnaturally young, with the air of things that have been embalmed. What would have happened to them had they been taken out eleven years ago? In all probability they would have been soon thrown away; at best by now they would be crumpled and yellow instead of crisp and clean as they are. I paused as I saw the familiar lines of *The Fish*, then known only to a few people, and only half-way towards publication. I thought of all that had happened since. All the talk then was of Ulster and the House of Lords and the vigorous youth of the Labour Movement. Brooke was still sauntering about Cambridge, provoking speculations and predictions, which never counted on a war, or a grave in the Ægean. The letter seemed a new letter; in a manner it had only just reached its destination; it was difficult to believe that the life which beat in it had long ago, seven years ago, ended, and that most of his generation were gone, too, left behind and already half-forgotten in a world which has little time for the past. It brought with it scenes from that past vividly realised, and revived stray pictures of Brooke himself which had been overlaid by later memories of him. He was only twenty-four then, certain of a Fellowship, seeming completely leisured. I can see him as he then was, standing hatless and sunburned in King's Parade, his fair hair ruffled, his gray eyes looking very direct and calm, a smile around his parted lips.

I stand beside him at a window, looking over the Embankment and the river in twilight, whilst he remarks occasionally on the lights and the amusingness of the sky-signs. I am in a crowd of young and excited men and women, talking politics; he sits on a window-seat above them, comfortable, but detached. I am at a smoking party of men, and late at night he stands in the doorway, having entered silently, a blue soft shirt on, a carefully careless black tie. He always had that way of appearing like a man of the Arabian Nights to whom the friendly genie has given the enchanted carpet and the ring of invisibility. He entered like that, easily, quietly, from the South Seas, and again from the flames and night marches of those few days at Antwerp; there was a mild radiance about him; the face could harden, but not into grimness; it was difficult to imagine his self-possession deserting him even amid scenes of the greatest excitement and danger.

So there that letter has been, pressed tight all these years in a drawer which would scarcely open, so full it was; squeezed between bills and programmes, notes making appointments, letters from Nigeria and China written by young men who are now living in the London suburbs, fathers with families. . . . Haphazard, in sporadic batches they were thrown in there when their fellows, equally chancily, went into waste-paper basket or fire. Most of them after their long reprieve have at last gone. One at least will not.

LAKE LEMAN

ACCIDENT led me to the Lake of Geneva. I had not been there for two hours before I wanted to call it Lake Leman, a designation I had never thought of employing before. Why? Simply because what I saw took me back into a departed literary epoch, and in that epoch writers always said Lake Leman. My room had a little balcony, trellised and twined with roses, over the blue lake. I stood in it and watched the approach of evening. As the sun sank over the waters a wide ray crept along the mountains above the southern shore, a faint, golden veil which, as it moved, turned the dark blue wall to purple. The sun touched the last bar of cloud; the warmth on the houses of Montreux and Chillon and the woods above them grew fainter; and then the grayness crept up the shore opposite, whilst the highest peaks and cliffs of the mountains deepened from gold to pink. At the lake's end, between the shadowy intersecting lines of the hills that enclose the Rhone Valley, high and massive behind them rose the ethereal mass of the Dent du Midi, with its row of snow peaks, all rose-pink against the pale blue. It was exquisitely pretty. It was a cottage oleograph that I had seen a thousand times. It was a back-scene at the opera. It was a restaurant fresco. It was a Victorian Academy painting. It was a water-colour done by a miss in a crinoline. It was an engraving by Finden in an illustrated edition of Lord Byron. It was Lake Leman.

I conceive that no corner of the world has been so freely celebrated in literature as the environs of this lake and the mountains to the south of it. Certainly

there is no foreign district which has left such traces on English literature and especially on English poetry. Its great period was from the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century, from Rousseau to Amiel. No writer, it seemed, could be happy until he had lived in a châlet by the blue waters of that inland sea and stood in a gap to admire the majestic head of Mont Blanc. It was at Lausanne, on the northern shore of the lake, that Gibbon concluded his Decline and Fall and wrote that wonderful passage of its autobiography in which he tells us how, having ended his last sentence, he walked under the trees to the moonlit waters and meditated on the waxing and waning of Empires, the passage of all mortal things. It was at Meillerie (I think) that Hazlitt found a momentary peace of mind and wrote the most delicious page of natural description in all his works. And to the English poets of that age the neighbourhood would seem to have been more familiar than the Thames.

You will find, so far as I remember, nothing in Sir Walter Scott or in Keats; though I may be mistaken about the first, and the second never had a chance. But in Wordsworth's *Prelude* there are magnificent things about these parts of the Alps; Coleridge's *Hymn* was the forerunner of hosts of poems about the Vale of Chamonix, and Shelley's *Mont Blanc* (also written in the Vale of Chamonix) is the finest of many poems and elaborate letters to which the mountains inspired him. But it is at the eastern end of the lake itself, the end at which I stood on my balcony, in what Leslie Stephen called "the sacred scenery round the head of Lake Geneva," that the literary associations are thickest. There, around Montreux and Chillon, every hill-crest and wood lives in an English poem. Matthew Arnold's two Obermann poems are almost catalogues, he mentions so many places: Avants and Vevey, Jaman and Glion, Chillon and the Rochers de

Naye, the flushed snow-peaks and the blue Rhone. Twenty years passed between those two poems, and change came. "White houses stand where then were huts" at Glion. Glion, on which Flecker wrote some verses, is, perhaps, the only spot in that corner which a poet of any eminence in our own day has mentioned. Arnold would to-day have noticed more change still. White hotels stand where then were houses, and the Glion funicular will take you up to them. Montreux has scores of Splendides and Majestics; Vevey is a resort; conducted parties go to the Rocks of Naye, up the precipitous woods to Caux, and even through the mountains forty miles to the Great St. Bernard, crags and snows, monks and dogs, in a charabanc.

Yet, oddly, whatever the hyper-fastidious may suppose or say, it makes very little difference. Shore and hills on the populous side are covered with trees. All that can be seen of Glion from below is a few white walls and red turrets half buried in the hill's thick fleece of trees. To build Montreux they had only a narrow strip of ground between the water and the leafy precipices: the street is pretentiously French when you are in it, but if you are on the lake you can see nothing but white buildings separated by trees and fronted by trees and gardens. Behind the gateway leading to the bridge which crosses the natural moat to the lake-surrounded rock of Chillon there stand, it is true, the Café du Château and the Hôtel de Bonivard (who was, you may remember, the unfortunate prisoner of that place), but you will not see them from the Castle, or, indeed, from anywhere except the road in front of them. And even were so much not concealed so successfully Man here could hardly hope to spoil Nature. Behind the narrow low coast-line rises the great semicircle of hills, wooded to the top on this shore, craggy and bare on the other; and the end of the calm blue lake is wide. Man may build what he will; it will be dwarfed into insignificance

by the mountains and the water; as things are all one sees around one is what Cæsar may have seen—with a narrow dark line between water and hill, broken by the minute eminences which are poplars or towers, and, immediately opposite, a small cluster of white specks on the edge of the blue water, a white speckling of the shore, a town of sorts, but nothing more to the eye than a little scattered snow which might have fallen thus low from the peaks above.

It is not strange that they were so ravished by Lake Leman. The strange thing is that any man should be able to see it and not want to paint it or write about it. Yet, as there is a fashion in travel, so there is novelty and staleness in the "local colour" of art. Rechristen all this corner and place a poet there who did not know it for what it was, and he might celebrate the peaks and the blue lake, the sunny walls, and the sky that shades from pallor at the horizon to a blue that is almost purple at the zenith, the poplar-pointed promontories, the drifting boats with their lateen sails like the white wings of butterflies, as they have never been celebrated before. Unfortunately he knows. Send him to the Ægean and, the Greeks being so far behind, he sees its loveliness freshly for himself. Send him here and it is Lake Leman; a cemetery of literature; a place in the guide-books; an established resort a little out of fashion; a sunnier Eastbourne or Bournemouth. It will not return yet; but when Tahiti and Morocco, the Caucasus and the Congo have been thoroughly "done" its turn will come again.

READING IN BED

Discussion amongst human beings is very difficult. There were three of us, and we talked about reading in bed. At the end of a quarter of an hour it dawned on us—we had had faint glimmerings of this before—that we had been talking about different things.

"What is the best thing to read in bed?" It sounds a sufficiently concrete item in the agenda. But we had overlooked the fact that men might read in bed with different motives. "If you were staying in a country house for the night, and found one of those little sliding bookcases on the table beside your bed, what would you like to find in it?" That also looked definite enough. But neither was really sufficiently precise. No allowance was made for temperament.

Of course, we all know what we *should* find in it. Granted a cultivated household, where the furniture was good, the walls tastefully hung, and the host and hostess *au fait* with modern literature and the latest political thought, very little latitude is conceivable. Either the small bookcase would contain two volumes of Mr. Shaw's plays, a volume of Mr. Granville Barker's, some Tchekov short stories, a book of sketches by Mr. Galsworthy, and a faded Ibsen volume published by the firm of Walter Scott; or else it would contain Mr. Chesterton's *The Defendant* and *A Miscellany of Men*, Mr. Belloc's *On Anything* and *Hills and the Sea*, a volume of essays by Mr. Lucas, and *Idlehurst*. Stay! there is a third possibility: Wordsworth, *Rab and His Friends*, the *Vailima Letters* and the *Essays of Elia*, with Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*, and something of Walter Bagehot's.

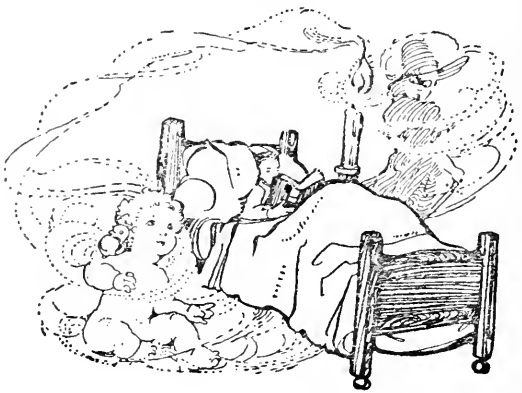
These are what one would, and does repeatedly, find. The question is: What would one wish to find, and why?

I gather that there are three objects in reading in bed. Some men pursue only one, some pursue each in turn, some have two or more in mind as alternatives at any particular moment. Firstly, you may read in bed in order to send yourself to sleep at the earliest possible moment. Well, there are occasions when one feels like that. I myself have for many years kept beside my pallet Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. I have never got through it. I always begin again at the same place, to wit, the first line. The result is that I probably know the first three pages as well as any man alive, and that I am totally ignorant as to what comes after. I may say in self-defence that I am not in the least degree curious about what comes after; but there it is. That is the first mode, and that the first object of reading in bed. Next there is the moderate course and the sensible object of the man who likes to read a little in bed, but does not want to be deprived of what grandmother would have called his beauty sleep. The book must not be boring; it must not be too exciting. It must be interesting on every page but dramatic nowhere; there must be a stream of event but no definite break. Well, I do not really think that those volumes of essays quite suit the case. The end of an essay usually comes just before that fatal, final blink, and one wants to begin another. What one needs is the book that can be begun anywhere and dropped anywhere; and I can conceive no books better in that regard than Boswell, Gibbon, Hakluyt, and Lucas's *Life of Lamb*. These are so long and so uniform that there is no hope of finishing them in a night, and no fear of worrying about a climax not reached; and they are so good that one never minds if one does read the same pages over and over

again. I found, in our discussion, that each of these species of nocturnal reading was favoured by one of my friends. But for myself I shamelessly confessed that, however tired I might be, I should always, even were the whole contents of the British Museum at call from my bed, ask for a shocker. Give me *Bulldog Drummond*, *Station X*, or *Trent's Last Case*, and I will read in bed until dawn. Let sleep go. Let the morrow's duties go. Let health, prudence, and honour go. The bedside book for me is the book that will longest keep me awake.

It is a large subject, and one seldom discussed. Hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of people every night in England read something in bed. They say nothing about it except "I read for a little last night and then slept like a top," or "I didn't feel like going to sleep last night, so I read for a bit," or "I began reading so-and-so in bed last night, and damn the book, I couldn't get to sleep until I finished it." Usually nothing at all is said; if anything is said it is very little. Yet what a large slice of each of our lives has gone in this harmless occupation. We get our clothes off. We get our pyjamas on. We wind our watches. We arrange the table and the light and get into bed. We pile up, or double up, the pillows. Then we settle down to it. Sometimes the book is so exciting that all thought of sleep fades away, and we read on oblivious of everything except the unseen menace in that dark house, the boat gliding stealthily along that misty river, the Chinaman's eyes peering through that greenish-yellow fog, or the sudden crack of the revolver in that den of infamy. Sometimes we read for a while and then feel as though we could go peacefully to sleep. Sometimes we struggle desperately to gum our failing attention to the acute analysis and safe deductions of our author. Our eyes squint and swim. Our head dizzies. We feel drunk, and, dropping

the book aside from lax hands, just manage to get the light out before falling back into a dense and miry slumber. We all know those fights against inevitable sleep, those resolves to reach the inaccessible end of the chapter, those swimmings in the head, those relapses into the gulf of oblivion. And we all know those long readings when the mystery and suspense of the text so excite us that every creak of the stair and every fluttering of the pertinacious moths makes the heart stand still, and then keeps it beating hard for minutes. We have all turned the light out just in time; and we have all turned it out from boredom, or in an access of determined common-sense, and then turned it on again to resume the dreary reading where we left the piece of paper or the pencil in the page. But we seldom talk about it. It is a part of our really private lives, which include also our operations in the bath-room, and our contrivances for keeping, at certain moments, our clothes together. These are universal experiences which each man thinks peculiar to himself, yet which hardly anybody ever thinks worth mentioning.



LIFE AT THE MERMAID

At breakfast, with an author more venerable, I opened a bookseller's catalogue which had just reached me from America. It contained many interesting things: manuscripts of Spaniards of whom I had never heard, early editions of old English writers of whom I had barely heard, desirable editions of the classics, this, that, and the other, and some first editions of illustrious contemporaries. I knew—I usually know as much—that I should not bother to write for anything from that catalogue, and could not pay for it if I did; nevertheless I proceeded like a caterpillar through the items. As I turned the tenth page I had a slight shock—it wasn't really surprising—at seeing six times repeated the name of my companion. He is a man of genius, and it is all quite fit and proper that the collectors of America should give, or at least be asked to give, considerable sums of money for the first editions of his books. "Hallo," I said, "they seem to be paying through the nose now for your first editions." "Ah?" he said. "Of course," I went on—and I was merely stating a fact—"the prices are nothing like so big as our grandchildren will pay." His answer was "Bigger —— fools they!"

There suddenly flashed on me a vision of those grandchildren—a vision, be it admitted, based on the assumption that our civilisation will endure, which is not certain. I saw a spacious room with glazed bookcases, and a young bibliophile showing another his rare editions and tooled bindings. They fingered one after another, and at last they came to

the first scarce work of my friend. I heard the conversation. "What did you give for that?" "Eighty-five pounds." "It's nice to have it with his signature in, knowing that he handled it. If he knew he might be consoled for the way people underrated him when he was alive." Probably there will be such conversations. There may be a Life of my friend; the Life may include some of his intimate correspondence and alleged specimens of his "table-talk." They will have a pretty good idea of his character and his genius, they will know his pedigree, the state of his finances, his goings to and fro on the earth. But with their inadequate information and their incorrigible romanticism they will have no notion as to what his real daily talk was like, as distinguished from his more intense conversation. Do we really know any dead man in his daily life? Dr. Johnson, some would say. We know his voice and his habits of mind better than most people's; yet even Boswell did not take down anything unless it seemed to be a little above the ordinary level, to have some special point or value. A gramophone record of Dr. Johnson's words through a whole day would supply us with something quite new. It would also diminish a little Dr. Johnson's apparent stature. We see the great dead as larger than human because we have of them, however much we have, only a refined essence. When we do really meet an ordinary fact—such as the fact that Mary Shelley irritated Percy (in the throes of composition) by asking him to fetch her cotton-reel from the corner where it had rolled—it stands out as something very illuminating. Meditating thus I attended a literary dinner, a regular dinner, one of a series that might conceivably be mentioned (for the oddest things turn up) in future literary memoirs and then in the histories. Good things were said, interesting books were discussed: but not all the time, no, not all the time. And I

wondered what the meetings of the Romantics were actually like, and what those evenings at the Mermaid Tavern. We know there were great times at the Mermaid, and one in fond reminiscence said that the frequenters would put their whole souls in a jest. Nevertheless other things were said, and I conceive that there *were* tracts of conversation like this:

SHAKESPEARE: I don't think much of this fish.

BEN JOHNSON: The fish has been filthy the last three times.

SHAKESPEARE: It's always like that at these places. They do you very well to start with, and when they think they've got you fixed it goes off.

DRAYTON: The waiters are getting pretty uncivil, too. Especially that ugly brute with the squint. I distrust that man.

BEN JOHNSON: I'm sick of the place. It's no better than the Sun was.

SHAKESPEARE: But is there anywhere else that we could try? Is it not better to endure the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of?

BEN JOHNSON: You might leave it to somebody else to quote your works.

SHAKESPEARE: I don't think the company has any right to complain so long as I don't quote yours.

CHAPMAN: Oh, shut up, you two, you're always at it!

BEAUMONT: We never seem to be able to discuss anything properly here. The point is, can we get a better dinner anywhere else, and, if so, where?

FLETCHER: At the same price, Francis?

BEAUMONT: Of course, Jack, that goes without saying.

CHAPMAN: Why shouldn't we go to the Devil?

SHAKESPEARE: Speak for yourself.

BEN JOHNSON: It's a pity you can't remember

to keep your weaker witticisms for the theatre, where they seem to like them.

CHAPMAN: The Devil really is rather a good place. Mrs. Jones is a nice old woman, and her cellar is extraordinarily good.

SHAKESPEARE: It may be, but all I can say is that the last pint of sack I drank there nearly poisoned me. It seems to me that we'd better stick where we are. But it's a rotten place.

ALL: Yes, rotten!

SHAKESPEARE: When's your new play coming on, Ben?

BEN JOHNSON: Oh, he says he thinks he'll get it on next week! It's a lie, of course. These managers make me sick. If he doesn't hurry up I shall publish it first.

SHAKESPEARE: Oh, I shouldn't do that!

BEN JOHNSON: Oh, we know *you* wouldn't! You'd never publish it at all. You'd leave it to some swindling printer to get it out, full of misprints. Personally I happen to be interested in what I write.

CHAPMAN: Oh, for God's sake stop quarrelling! You make the place a bear-garden. What's the news about Spain?

DONNE: Nothing doing. I saw the Lord Chamberlain yesterday and he said he'd just seen old Gondomar, and he seemed very amiable. There's some talk of the Prince of Wales marrying an Infanta.

SHAKESPEARE: It's enough to make poor old Drake turn in his grave.

BEN JOHNSON: Oh, you're a sentimentalist!

SHAKESPEARE: Chuck it about; I don't mind. All I know is that the more I see of politics the less I like them.

DRAYTON: Nice boy, the Prince of Wales.

BEAUMONT (whispering loudly to FLETCHER): No wonder Drayton thinks so, considering that the

kid has just given him fifty quid to help publish his rotten epic.

DRAYTON: I heard what you said. It's not true. It's all that Browne's doing. He's always putting these absurd stories about.

SHAKESPEARE: Don't take it to heart, Mike; they're only pulling your leg.

BEN JOHNSON: Faugh! Mutton again. I don't believe they've given us anything but mutton for eighteen months.

SHAKESPEARE: Mutton is so sheep, you see.

(*Loud howls.*)

CHAPMAN (to DRAYTON): How many lines is your epic?

DRAYTON: I can't tell yet, the second part isn't finished. I should think it might run to ten thousand.

CHAPMAN: My Homer is more than that I should think.

SHAKESPEARE: Such long lines too. If you were being paid by the line I should advise your splitting them in halves.

FLETCHER: Do you know Mary Fitton?

DONNE: No; I think Shakespeare does; I've heard rather odd things about her. Don't you know Miss Fitton, William?

SHAKESPEARE: No; I've just met her. She seemed to be rather an ass; clever, of course, but boring. She will insist on talking about books all the time. I met her at the Bacons'.

FLETCHER (to BEAUMONT): I don't suppose there's anything in it. This town is a fearful place for gossip.

SHAKESPEARE: I say, you people, I'm awfully sorry to break up the party, but I've got to get back by Stratford by next Friday and a man has offered me a lift. I simply must get there.

(*Rises to go.*)

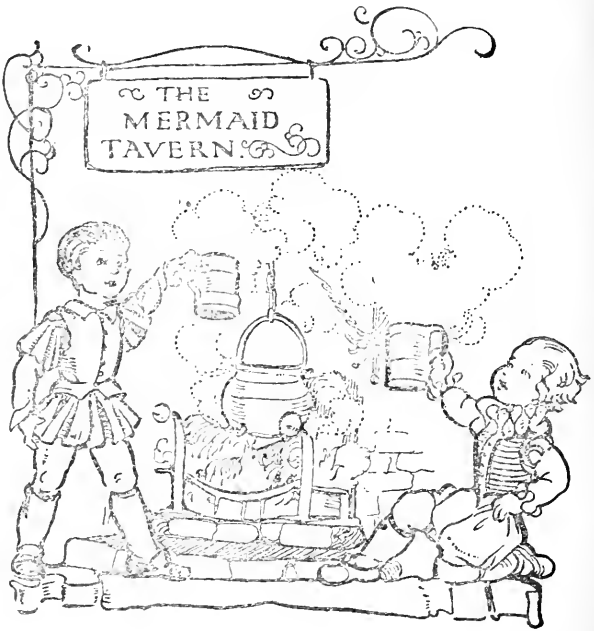
DONNE: What's the hurry? Don't tell us you ever *do* anything at Stratford.

SHAKESPEARE: Oh, it's a deal with a man about wool! I don't see why one shouldn't turn an honest penny when one gets the chance.

BEAUMONT: Well, just one more, William.

SHAKESPEARE: All right, just one more, but it will have to be a quick one. . . .

I have telescoped history a little, and I have been at no pains to achieve an archaistic realism by sprinkling the dialogue with marrys, gulls, wittols, and argosies. But I daresay that is what the Mermaid was like.



THE NEW STYLE OF MEMOIR

It is about time somebody made a heavy protest against the latest form of memoir—the contemporary memoir in which the author takes advantage of opportunities which have been given to him as a private person, pillories those who have innocently admitted him to their homes, repeats strictly private conversations, or describes purely private assemblies out of which he would have been promptly booted if anybody present had known what he was up to. There have been four or five of these in the last few years. We all read them (we can't help it), and they are commercially profitable. Nothing but a dead set against offending authors will stop their increase.

Now I need scarcely say that I am not arguing against the recording of any and every event, literary or political, likely to be of historical interest: of any dinner party, conversation, secret intrigue, odd, strange, significant, or diverting word or deed of any species whatever. We can say what we like about the dead. Doubtless *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* has an element of truth in it: we should be especially careful about calumniating a person who is no longer able to defend himself. But even here one remembers that calumny against a living person may not merely damage his reputation but ruin his life, so that if you *are* to be maligned there is (in the words of the poet)

> A good deal to be said
> For being dead.

The thoughtless persons who quote *De mortuis* do

not seem to realise that if their precious maxim were literally acted upon all history, and all biography, would be abolished at one swoop. No man could really be expected to hoax himself into thinking it amusing, or serviceable, to write history on these lines:

> So Henry VIII. died, as he had lived, in the odour of sanctity, beloved by his wife (Catherine of Aragon), who was his first and only romance, and revered by his people. His spare features and sympathetic deep-sunken eyes, so vividly preserved for us on the canvases of Holbein, attest the unworldly character of the man and the austerity of his life. No unfortunate incident marred the perfect serenity of his reign, save one only, the execution of Sir T. More, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of an official who never recovered from his remorse, though no blame could possibly attach to him. The King was out of town and heard nothing until too late. He wore mourning for the rest of his life. . . .
>
> If there was one thing Charles II. detested more than marital infidelity, it was easy cynicism [but no—all his contemporaries are dead, so there cannot possibly have been any infidelity or cynicism for him to detest], and the industry with which he served the commonwealth has never been surpassed by an English monarch, though every English monarch has equalled it. One of his noble actions was his refusal, when short of cash, owing to his large benefactions, of a gift of money from Louis XIV. on the ground that it might *appear* to put him under an improper obligation. That, of course, was far from being in the mind of the French King, and it is difficult to say upon which Sovereign the incident reflects most credit. . . .

> Napoleon, Emperor of the French, a man distinguished for the sacredness which he attached to human life and the implicit trust he put in human nature, died at St. Helena in 1821. He had abdicated in 1815 owing to failing health, and chose that sunny island on the advice of his doctors, finding a great solace during his last years in the congenial conversation of an Englishman, Sir Hudson Lowe, who exiled himself in order to be near his invalid friend. His name, as a benefactor of mankind, stands in the company of those of Elizabeth Fry, Frederick the Great, St. Francis of Assisi, Lord Rockingham, and Nero. . . .
>
> An interesting figure of the time was Charles Peace, a quaint and lovable Yorkshireman, with a great love of adventure, and a delightful talent as a violinist. He was born in Yorkshire, but lived latterly in South London, though he died away from home.

That is the *reductio ad absurdum* of that over-driven and foolish proverb. We want about the dead the truth, and if our age has no Pepys, no Horace Walpole, no Charles Greville, posterity will be deprived of both the edification and the amusement to which it is entitled. Let people record as much as they can of those who are likely to be interesting to our descendants. But let them keep it for our descendants: or at least let them give their records time to get too stale to embarrass the persons they are writing about.

If people are to repeat private conversations they had last year—there *may* be exceptional occasions when urgent considerations of public interest make such a thing, after solemn reflection, seem right—private life becomes impossible. It is only a stage from printing reports of private discussions three or four years ago to treating private conversations as news. Unless some action is taken against

gross offenders, it will not be long before some more reckless and enterprising successor of Colonel Repington's goes to a dinner one night and has in the papers next morning a description of what everybody present said and did. You cannot elaborately swear everybody present to secrecy before you sit down; yet you never know who is going on the loose as a diarist next. Yet how can one keep a rein upon one's tongue, or how would anything ever get done if everybody were mute as a fish on every subject except the weather? Civilisation is only held together by an honourable respect for private life, by pledges unspoken but nevertheless implicit. There are thousands of people in London who, if they cared to print their recent recollections or their diaries, could make sensations and large sums of money. Even my ears, which have not listened to the whisperings of the Great with a hundredth part of Colonel Repington's assiduity, have received impressions which, if I were to transmit them to paper, would be quoted in every newspaper, titillate a large public, cause distress in many homes, and give trouble to a fair number of important people. Are we coming to a time when I shall be considered rather a brisk fellow if I suddenly launch them all upon a printer?

It isn't only that things may be divulged which will cause serious trouble, though in recent diaries there have been these, but that people object to having their private lives and characters, however flatteringly, discussed in print at all. It is irritating to find one's friends saying in print that one is fond of one's children or that one gave a luncheon at which the food was very good. People don't like it. It isn't vanity, nor is it modesty, that makes them shrink from the modern sort of publicity: it is merely the common human desire for a measure of privacy and the common human feeling that there is an honourable obligation to respect that privacy

if you are admitted into it. All else apart, even when harmless truths are told, they are often so told as to give false impressions. For myself, I am not sufficiently, I am happy to say, of public interest to make it worth anybody's while to publish the fact that he came to lunch at my house on Sunday, that So-and-So and So-and-So were there, and that we said this and that about the French, Mr. Wells, the Russians, and President Wilson. But if anybody were to do that he would get a pretty hot reception next time he attempted to speak to me. And I cannot understand how those who have been molested can behave otherwise to persons who have thus annoyed them.

PRONUNCIATION

THE conversationalist in this country has a thorny road to tread. A correspondent writes, poor thing, to ask me, in confidence, how he should pronounce "Quixote," a word he finds frequently cropping up in his talk. His natural inclination and early practice was to speak of Don Quixote as though the cavalier had an English "x" in his name. Of late years he has found, when in circles where people really do know things, a growing tendency to pronounce the name in the Spanish way—which we may represent, though inadequately, by the spelling Keehotte. Now, my correspondent, being a sailor, is a shy and sensitive man. He feels sheepish. He does not want to drop "Don Quixote" out of his life altogether, as it is one of his favourite books, and he even has theories about it. But he is afraid. If he says "Quix" in the coarse English manner he fears that the experienced and supercilious landsman may stare at him as at an illiterate boor; but he shrinks from tackling the other pronunciation, partly because he knows he couldn't do it without looking self-conscious, partly because he does not wish to affect an acquaintance with Spanish which he does not possess, and partly because he is sure he would never get it right. He might even be so far from right that somebody, not understanding or pretending not to understand, might make him repeat the outlandish syllables, a process which would cause him to blush all down his back. What, he asks, should he do?

Say "Quix" and make no bones about it. It is

an easier instance than most of its kind. "Quixote" has had an English pronunciation for years, a pronunciation as established as our pronunciation of "Paris," which no Englishman talking to another Englishman would dream of calling Paree. Not only this, but it has generated an English adjective. I doubt if the most pedantic or the most priggish of men says "Keehottic" for "Quixotic"; yet it is grotesque to pronounce the one word in the English way whilst perspiring to restore an alien pronunciation to the other. But the case would be quite strong enough without that. There is no point whatever in forcing a foreign pronunciation (unless we are talking to foreigners) of some names unless we do the same for all. To go no further from Don Quixote than its author, there is Cervantes. He was a great man, and there are many interesting things about him. We know that—

> The Spaniards think Cervantes
> Worth half-a-dozen Dantes,
> An opinion resented bitterly
> By the people of Italy.

He wrote one of the narrative masterpieces of the world, and thought it much inferior to his other works, which nobody can now read. But the point about him in our present connection is that his "C" is not pronounced by the Spaniards as an English "C," but rather (I hope I am correct—I do not know any Spanish) as a "th"; and when the Spaniards don't sound "c" as "th" they sound it as "k." Yet the prig has still to begin operations who will call him (otherwise than because of some defect of utterance) Thervantes at an English dinner-table. Some words have always had a specially English pronunciation; some (like Calais, which Englishmen used to pronounce Callis) have had one

and lost it. We can never be thoroughly systematic about it, but the man is a fool who arbitrarily selects some foreign word which we have incorporated and attempts to denaturalise it again.

"Don Quixote" is not the only name now being contested. The generation has not yet arisen which will suddenly begin calling Munich Munchen, but the Trafalgár affectation has been in full swing for some years. In Nelson's day and long afterwards all Englishmen said "Trafálgar."

'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay,

the song ran, not—

'Twas in the Bay of Trafalgar.

Then somebody discovered—what was no doubt known to many of Nelson's seamen, not to mention Drake's and, for all I know, Hanno's—that the Spaniards accented the last syllable. Such a piece of knowledge was too precious not to be paraded, and there is now a double pronunciation. The "masses" still stick to the English pronunciation; the educated are almost evenly divided, though most of them, perhaps, say Trafalgár when they remember to. There is only one thing to be said in favour of Trafalgár. Trafálgar will not rhyme; the battle is constantly being written about; and Trafalgár will rhyme very nicely with words like star, avatar, nenuphar, bar, and cigar. But here again it is easy to point out the absurdity of the priggish pronunciation. The twin of Trafalgar is Waterloo. No foreigner pronounces that word as we do. The local pronunciation is Vaterlo; and when a Frenchman recites Victor Hugo's stirring stanzas about it he says:

Vaterlo, Vaterlo, Vaterlo, morne plaine.

Now, it is plainly preposterous to make a great effort to pronounce Trafalgar like an Andalusian whilst ignoring the French and Belgian pronunciation of Waterloo. Possibly "Vaterlo" will be the next affectation; and then we shall be asked to drop "Rome" for "Roma."

In all these matters of pronouncing foreign names the maxim, not always applicable elsewhere, clearly applies, "what was good enough for our fathers is good enough for us." Since we cannot be logical and pronounce all foreign words as foreigners do, we might at least avoid futile pedantry and wanton changes. The people who are always trying to impose these tasks on our clumsy English tongues are always either men who are proud of possessing unimportant knowledge which others do not possess, or still baser men who wish to be thought the possessors of such knowledge. They do not confine their ravages to our traditional pronunciations; they are equally fond of tinkering with spelling. It doesn't much matter how we spell the name of a foreign town or country so long as we all spell it alike. But once we have found a spelling comfortable it is maddening to have to alter it merely because some vainglorious fellow has seen a foreign map. When we were younger all Englishmen spelt "Corea"; that has gone, and "Korea" has taken its place. The change would have been reasonable had the House of Commons, the British Academy, the Large Black Pig Society, or some other body which we might entrust with the control of our orthography, decided that all our hard English c's should be turned into k's. But we just pounce on this one unhappy word, whilst never thinking of bringing Kochin China, the Kaliph, Kolombo, Kalkutta, or the Kape of Good Hope into line with it. It is no good saying that the

Koreans and the Chinese use a k and not a hard c; for they use neither, preferring some sign which looks like a fragment of a bird-cage. Some one prig was originally responsible for that alteration, and he had a numerous progeny during the late war. There was the man who suddenly began—and half of the others copied him within a month—calling the Sea of Marmora the Sea of Marmara, having seen that spelling in a French paper, or perhaps in a footnote of Sir Richard Burton's. He was a kindred spirit of the other pioneer who dropped the "o" out of what, until the war, was always spelt "Roumania." Every year now we shall find the attentions of these laborious scholars devoted to some new work. Possibly Morocco (our spelling cannot conceivably represent the Moorish spelling) will begin appearing in leading articles as "Marrakha," or "Marrakka," or "Marakh," or some such thing. Or the gross Englishdom of "The Hague" will revolt the fastidious taste of some journalist who has done a week's walking tour in Holland, and we shall be treated to Den Haag or 'S Gravenhage or whatever it is. Or the Bay of Napoli will start creeping in, or the Shah of Persia will become the Tchah of Perzhia, or Bokhara will become Bukhara, or Teheran will become Tihran. We cannot prevent these pointless alterations; needs must be that follies should come, though woe unto him through whom they come. But as individuals those of us who desire to avoid affectation and prefer, as a general rule, to let well alone should make a point of conforming to existing usage in spelling, and in pronunciation, of employing those sounds which are more comfortable to our tongues and most conformable to the English language and traditions. Next time my correspondent refers to Cervantes he should say Quixote with a "q" and with an "x," and say it both loud and clear. If anybody looks at him he should then repeat it without

shamefacedness. And, provided his nerves hold out, if some one should try the Spanish pronunciation on him after he himself has used the other, let him pretend not to understand. Above all, let him never make a cowardly mumbling noise in the hope that it may be taken for *either* pronunciation of *any* word.

BY LEWIS CARROLL

A MAN can never tell where he will find books for sale nor what he will find if he enters the shop. The greatest discovery I myself ever made was made in a grubby second-hand shop off the Marylebone Road, where a few dozen dilapidated volumes were sprinkled about among old military medals, cane chairs, Victorian photographs, and sooty toilet-ware. The other day I found myself with two hours to spare in a cathedral town. The rain suddenly began to come down in solid sheets. I hurried along until I came to a likely doorway and found myself in another, though a greatly superior shop, where the products of all the arts lived in harmonious disarray. The books numbered some hundreds, and I set myself to a systematic inspection. Had the weather been finer or I less equable, the inspection would not long have continued. I have said it was a cathedral town. One did not, therefore, expect to find piles of the most modern literature, and, in fact, there was none save a few novels, such as the early books of Mr. Frankfort Moore, which had been at last superannuated by the ladies of the Close. And the old books were considerably more attractive outside than inside. Their worn jackets of calf or pig or vellum were noble; but the collection of dead sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century pedantry they contained would have appalled Sir John Sandys himself. They were not even the works of the best known of dead theologians and editors: not one of their authors had been heard of for generations. "Some of these must be rare," remarked the dealer optimistically. "I

don't doubt it," I replied. "In that case," said he, "if one could only find people who want these particular books, we should get good prices for them." His logic was irrefutable; the fact he ignored was the very stubborn fact that not one being in the world ever could want these books. Nevertheless, I opened all the big ones on the open shelves, then all the little ones, and then, still hopeful, the lower rows in a closed cupboard. Nothing came to light. I do not like to stay a long time in a shop and buy nothing. I, therefore, gloomily selected the Cambridge University Calendar for 1826—which is somewhat out of date, for scarcely half of the present dons were on the books then—and a late copy of Somerville's *The Chase*, and prepared to go.

It was the hour of luncheon; my hands were covered with dust and my overcoat sticky with cobwebs. I began searching my pockets for money. But there was one top shelf in the glazed cupboard which I had not yet reached. One never knows what one will come across, I reminded myself. Most of its contents were visible at a distance; dull little rows of the British Essayists, *The World*, *The Microcosm*, *The Traveller*, or their analogues. But a few unlabelled books in the corner were worth taking down, and I took them down. One was *Reading Without Tears*, which I certainly could not read without tears; there were also pamphlets about growing roses and resisting sin; and there were volumes of verses by extinct spinsters and clergymen. Almost the last I reached was a small, flat-backed book in faded dark purple, with a sober blind-stamped pattern around the covers and the title, in large gilt letters—comma and all—*Index, to In Memoriam.* I opened it: "Rare, 2s. 6d.," was the inscription. It was at least rare enough for me never to have heard of it, though it was published by Moxon in 1862, and carried at the end Moxon's January, 1862, list. It

would be an exaggeration to call it a readable volume. It is not an entire concordance, but every phrase is indexed under the principal nouns and verbs it contains. A desire to economise type-setting led the authors to abbreviate the main words in their quotations. The result is forty pages in double columns filled with entries, oddly comic in their effect, like:—

I do but *s* because I must
Grief as deep as *l*
The common *l* of good
Office of the social *h*
Abuse the genial *h*
To beat the *g*
And said "The *d*, the *d*"
More faith in honest *d*
Din and steam of *t*
The *u* of "I" and "me."

I lingered over it, and then I looked at Moxon's list, a list which would do credit to any publisher. *Works by the Poet Laureate* headed it; underneath the table came—what do you think?

*** The above works are always to be had in Morocco Bindings.

Even at this date we could have told Mr. Moxon that. He did not show, however, all the respect he might have shown to the Poet Laureate. There was a little room left on that first page of the catalogue, and he squeezed three more titles into it. One was Col. George Greenwood's *Hints on Horsemanship to a Nephew and Niece*, no doubt an excellent manual enunciating right principles and warning against dangerous errors; but the others, cheek by jowl with the works of Tennyson, as though there were no

difference between them, were *Athelstan, a Poem*, and some *Lays of the Better Land*, by E. L. What were they and where are they now?

Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates* was in Moxon's list; so were the works of Lamb and Hood, the illustrated editions of Rogers, "works by the late William Wordsworth," and numbers of Coleridge's books, including the second edition of *Biographia Literaria*. Mrs. Shelley's edition of Shelley comes on the same page as Goethe's *Faust*, translated by "A. Hayward, Esq., Q.C." This was Abraham, the conversationalist of the Athenæum Club: his prose translation was already in its seventh edition, but I fancy it is now as little known as that deplorably feeble volume of original verses which he allowed himself to publish. Hogg's *Life of Shelley* and Trelawny's *Recollections* head the last page with two other books, known still by name but scarcely otherwise: Milnes' Poems in three volumes, and Talfourd's dramatic works in one. Talfourd certainly had fame; this was the eleventh edition of his collected plays. But he fades. Last year I saw the original complete manuscript of his masterpiece *Ion* offered by a Scottish bookseller for £5. Five pounds: and I was not even tempted to buy it.

"Rare, 2s. 6d." . . . a concordance, which I can never conceivably use, to *In Memoriam* . . . Moxon's list of fifty years ago. . . . "I think I will have this," I said. I turned back to the fly-leaf and examined an inscription I had casually noticed there. This is how it ran:

> To A. W. Dubourg with sincere regards from C. L. Dodgson, one of the compilers, Oct., 1873.

I passed it to the merchant for confirmation of the price. He also glanced at the inscription, but he did not take it in, and as he had just been telling me,

with every appearance of delight, of the rare first editions which he had bought for next to nothing from people who were unfit to look after them, I felt no scruple about refraining from explanation. C. L. Dodgson was Lewis Carroll; it may be that his Index is as well known as his Alice; I at least had never seen it before, and I conceive that few people know the book and fewer will know that he was "one of the compilers." I imagined that conversation in 1873, eleven years after that labour of love had been completed. Mr. Dubourg was, I seem to have heard, a Parliamentary official of some sort. Perhaps they were intimate friends; or perhaps they met occasionally at dinner parties, and one evening the dialogue, known to most authors in most ages, took place:

DUBOURG: I don't think he's ever done anything better than *In Memoriam*.

DODGSON: No; I agree; it is a beautiful thing; I read it constantly.

DOUBOURG: So do I; but I wish it were easier to find one's way about it. Somebody ought to make an index to it, so that we could look up any particular phrase.

DODGSON (*with a slightly wistful smile*): Oh, it's been done. As a matter of fact I did it myself eleven years ago; at any rate, I and another man. But I'm not surprised you've not seen it. Nobody ever has.

DUBOURG: Is it still to be got?

DODGSON: I shouldn't think so. I should imagine it was remaindered or pulped years ago.

DUBOURG: That is a nuisance.

DODGSON: As a matter of fact I've got about twenty copies at home. If you like I'll send you one when I get back.

DUBOURG: Oh, thanks ever so much. I should love to have one. Don't forget to write your name in it.

But possibly it didn't happen like this. Possibly it was another Dubourg. Possibly—unpleasing thought—it was even another C. L. Dodgson. I shall look it up.

PRESS CUTTINGS

THERE are people who are perpetually curious to know what others are saying about them behind their backs. Whenever we meet them it does not take long for the conversation to drift in the direction of their preoccupation. "Somebody," remarks the person of this type, "told me the other day—I can't quite believe it—that Jones told a party at Smith's house that I was addicted to cocaine. Can he have said it, do you think?" You, liking everybody to be happy, and perhaps thinking Jones capable of saying almost anything when flown with insolence and wine, reply disingenuously that the report is ridiculous. "I'm sure," you say, "that he couldn't have said anything so absurd, except possibly as a joke." That doesn't get you out of it. "It didn't come to *me* as a joke. I wish you'd be honest with me. I'd much rather know precisely where I stand with people." If you have self-command, you continue to produce evasions and lies until you can change the subject; but too many people yield to temptation and proceed, under a catechism which they invite whilst pretending not to dislike it, to repeat all the backbitings they can remember. The questioner never really wants to hear that people have called him a fool or a bigamist, a bad artist or a sponger upon the public purse. Sometimes it is his vanity that makes him imagine perpetual conversations about himself and curious, at whatever cost, to get an inkling of them. Sometimes it is his self-distrust that leads him to be perpetually hunting for expressions of opinion that will buttress him up in his own esteem, the result of his searches usually

being precisely the opposite. "What did he say about me? . . . You might as well tell me. . . . I can assure you I shan't mind." But usually they do mind.

But what is all this? you will ask. These moralisings may be true and even trite, but why do they appear here on a page supposed to have something to do with books and their authors? Reader, what you have just perused is a first paragraph. The essential thing about the art of writing an essay is that you should not plunge at once into the subject you intend to discuss. Lead the reader gradually to it. That way you will give him a surprise, and produce also the illusion that he has shared in a wandering train of thought. All the best essayists do it; many of them, I believe, do the beginnings of their essays last, and start them at as remote a point from the main theme as possible. Myself, I am forgetful, hasty, spontaneous, naturally candid and devoid of artifice. But I have remembered this time; even yet I have not reached my subject; I feel a certain, as I hope justifiable, pride in the achievement; and I trust I may be pardoned for calling the reader's attention to it. That first paragraph is by no means perfect; for it had, as will be seen, a direct relation with my subject. The subject wasn't actually mentioned; but a master of the mode would have begun with "Sir Walter Raleigh once said," or "When Layard was digging in the ruins of Nineveh," or "I was walking down Bishopsgate one day last week." Never mind; so far as it goes it is all right. And now for the subject proper, which impalpably dawns at this stage like the sun slipping out of the barred, low clouds of morning twilight. I conceive of authors who too avidly study their press-cuttings as in the same unfortunate position as those too curious listeners.

It all arose really out of a conversation with a man

of genius, for whose character and art I have great respect. He told me that he was in the habit of reading his press-cuttings, and that sometimes they gave him acute pain and even kept him awake. People said such malicious things; other people thoughtlessly said such unfair things. Why weren't people more amiable, more careful, more inclined to assume that they had no monopoly of decency, sense, and artistic ideals? "Why on earth," I asked him, "do you subscribe to these things if they upset you?" He couldn't exactly say. He had contracted the habit, and the habit had become a disease. He hoped he would have the resolution to break himself of it; but he wasn't sure. Nor am I. I doubt if he will.

I have met a good many authors who have had this experience. I know several who refrain from buying press-cuttings and even from searching the papers for reviews of their own books. Some of them know that they will either be bored or irritated by the great majority of the references to their works; others are frankly indifferent. No sensible person, I take it, is totally incurious about criticism of himself. Informed criticism is interesting, maybe useful, and, if favourable, warms the heart. But in point of fact I don't think that the author who refrains from the systematic collection of press-cuttings is likely to miss much that should really interest him. He and his friends will be in the habit of seeing most of the journals in which serious criticism is likely to appear; everything really complimentary is pretty certain to be brought to his notice; he will be lucky if accident or the well-meant effort of misguided acquaintance stops short at that. Even if a criticism of any seriousness appears in a local paper in the Orkneys, somebody—very likely the author of it—will probably draw his attention to it. If not, no harm is done: the main purpose of current criticism

being to keep the public informed, not to give authors a happy or unhappy five minutes at breakfast. Let persons who are easily wounded check their morbid curiosity and leave press-cuttings alone. Nine reviews out of ten are not worth reading.

The one kind of man who should and will go on getting press-cuttings is the man who likes absurdities I knew one signal example of this. I used to stay with him. Little pink bundles of cuttings arrived almost every morning. He would open them, unroll them, glance rapidly through them. The long commentaries from "serious" papers he would glance at, giving a grunt of satisfaction if they appeared to be good advertisements, but not reading them. He had his own opinion of his merits; for the rest he was interested in the criticism of certain friends. But he would put aside anything grotesquely short and summary, any paragraphs from "gossip" columns, any reviews from very outlandish places, like Sligo or Kirkcaldy. These promised well, and he went through them closely. Every now and then he would laugh with great complacency and pass one across, for it contained something preposterous, some absurdly-worded laudation or quite extravagant abuse. And the pearls he would keep. The best out of many years' supply he had hung, mounted and framed, around his study. Over the desk were three portraits of other men with his own name falsely printed underneath them—mistakes made by newspapers. Dominant above the fireplace was a row of invectives: one provincial scribe had called him a pretentious ignoramus, and another a sinister cynic. He liked it. That is the kind of man for whom press-cuttings are worth while. The others, I think, would be far better off without them. It is not healthy for men to get into the way of hungering for notice and brooding over casual and ephemeral things said about them by Tom, Dick, or Harry.

ON KNOWING AUTHORS

I MET a man who said he had met another man. "I always thought," he said, "that he was one of the best people alive, but I found him disappointingly commonplace." I suggested, as unobtrusively as I could, that if the original conception was right the gentleman could not possibly be commonplace; though it might be his natural habit or his whim to confine his conversation with strangers to commonplace topics. It wasn't the first time I've heard such a remark; in fact, I have often heard would-be hero-worshippers say despondently that they are almost always disappointed in great men when they meet them. But what portents do they expect?

You stand with an artist drinking cocktails at the American bar in the Royal Automobile Club, or you sit next to him at a dinner in the Fishmongers' Hall, or you meet him at an evening party in a friend's house, or you are introduced to him in the street. Those are the sort of encounters you have with a man whom you do not know very well. You talk about other people, whether they are nice, nasty, clever, foolish, generous, spiteful, ill, well, prosperous, or in difficulties; or you exchange notes about Mr. Lloyd George; or you discuss American prohibition; or you ask each other if you have read *War and Peace*, André Gide, or the posthumous novels of Henry James. Your conversation, in fact, is ordinary human conversation; the poet or the romantic novelist or the metaphysician is as likely as anybody else to ask you what is going to win the Derby, why the Irish want separation, which is the best village in Cornwall for a family's summer holiday, or whether

there is a chance that the medical profession will some day discover something about influenza. He will, assuming he does not live behind an impenetrable wall of silence, be at worst an ordinary talker and at best a brilliant one. But in the general way he will not be uncommonly profound or passionate or tender. This often leads people to say that they are disappointed in artists; the men do not come up to their works. A little reflection will demonstrate that it is impossible that artists should lack qualities which are really present in their works.

I mean qualities of thought and feeling. A man may have the gift of literary and not the gift of vocal expression. Goldsmith "wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll." The extreme instance would be a dumb man, who might nevertheless be the most eloquent of essayists. Some men talk as well as they write; some better than they write; some as they write; and some differently. But nothing can come out of a man except what is there, and if you find a sympathetic heart in a man's writing which he does not show over the cocktails, it merely means that over the cocktails he is too reserved, proud, shy, preoccupied, or merely interested to show it. Keats, at the Burford Bridge Hotel, would not have talked to stray acquaintances in the strain of "Lone star, would I were stedfast as thou art"; even with his friends, or with Fanny Brawne in person, he would not be doing that all the time. Elderly memoirists still insist on describing Browning as "a red-faced diner out," and exclaiming at an apparent incompatibility between his conviviality and his poetry. This is mere lack of imagination. What you clearly have to do is to reconcile the two, to realise that men are many-sided, and that Browning was merely an unusually striking demonstration of the fact that men do not commonly show their deeper sides in public. The rubicund old gentleman

who took Lady Edith down to dinner was not entirely absorbed in eating and gossiping; he did not secrete poems unconsciously in his sleep. That morning he had been wrestling in prayer or harassed by the evil in the world; even at moments amid the silk and silver and glass of the dinner-party there were intervals when, whilst his lips were bantering or chatting about Lord Granville or the Russians or the Royal Academy, he saw eternity through his surroundings, all the gaiety and the grandeur fading like a flower, or throbbed at the beauty of a remembered sea or ached with an old remembered grief.

And so your artist, if he really has something in him, when you meet him in the street, or at—it is possible—a croquet competition, or on the Dover-Ostend boat, or at a committee meeting of the Authors' Society. Do you expect him suddenly to buttonhole you and ask you if you are saved? Do you expect him to go on his knees and pray, insist on calling your attention to the tints of his liqueurs, rhapsodise over lights and shadows, and confide in you the dreams of his first love, or of how he sweated last night when he faced the imminence of Death? Certainly not. Yet it is of such things that art is made; it is emotions and reflections of this nature which we ordinarily find in the art, and suppose, casually meeting him, not to exist in the artist who has put them there. Shakespeare, as we know, was obliged to spend part of his time signing deeds, arranging mortgages, and suing people for debt; one can hear his contemporaries saying to each other, "How that fellow can have written *To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow* beats me." The fact is that he wrote it, and that what in him it sprang from was present when he was in the Law Courts and present when he was at the Mermaid, being rebuked (*sufflaminandus erat*) by mutton-fisted Ben for excessively voluble high spirits.

The fact is that the mere routine of living takes most of our time, and that few men live with their hearts perpetually on their sleeves. An artist has at least his art for communication; outside that he is only like the generality of mankind if he seldom shows his best and deepest sides. Even a sensitive man's most intimate friends will seldom get into so close a contact with him as one establishes at once if one reads a good book. There are moments when by imperceptible gradations two people—rarely more than two together—fall into confidences and unlock the secret thoughts, visions, and hankerings of years. We have all known such moments and we treasure the memory of them. It is, perhaps, as well that we do not systematically seek them; anyhow, to the person of imagination they are not very necessary. Artist or not, there is always a man behind the mask. About the artist we have more information. That is why "character sketches" of business men or politicians are nearly always interesting, whereas "character sketches" of artists tell us nothing that we did not know already—tell us much less, in fact. For the artist himself has already told us everything that he has to say.

CANDID BIOGRAPHY

Who's Who and *The Literary Year Book* are not such modern institutions as you might think or as I thought until the other day. I noticed in a catalogue, and at once bought for too large a price, a work, one hundred and five years old. The title-page is open before me. I will transcribe its text, as it illustrates rather well how our manner of expressing ourselves has altered. The modern equivalent of such a work would be given some such name as *The Authors' Who's Who* or *A Dictionary of Living Writers.* But in the year after Waterloo this is how they put it—and in a variety of types, small and large, roman, italic, and gothic, which I am not going to distract my printers by attempting to reproduce:

A
BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY
OF THE
LIVING AUTHORS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
COMPRISING
Literary Memoirs and Anecdotes of Their Lives;
AND A
CHRONOLOGICAL REGISTER OF THEIR PUBLICATIONS,
WITH THE NUMBER OF EDITIONS PRINTED,
INCLUDING
Notices of Some Foreign Writers Whose Works Have Been Occasionally Published in England,
illustrated by
A VARIETY OF COMMUNICATIONS
From Persons of the First Eminence in the
WORLD OF LETTERS.

LONDON
PRINTED FOR HENRY COLBURN,
Public Library, Conduit Street, Hanover Square.
1816.

There follows a dedication to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, in which his attention to the Arts is respectfully commended and the influence of Britain in the world is described in Johnsonian periods culminating in "Thus have Morals and Letters consecrated what Victory has achieved and Commerce extended." Paraphrased this comes to "Trade follows the Flag, and Morals and Letters follow Trade." But let us hasten on.

The Preface gives the reasons for such a publication and supplies, incidentally, the very astonishing information that the most important previous guide to living British authors had been published in German, in Berlin, by a Gottingen Professor. We then come to the first of four hundred and fifty large pages full of biographies, an extraordinary monument of erudition. Virtually everybody who had ever written a book was included; even the obscurest curate who had let slip a pamphlet sermon in Exeter or Lichfield has his line or two giving his college and degree. The first name is that of Mr. Speaker Abbott (afterwards Lord Colchester) who, on the strength of three legal treatises, is given a full length biographical summary, which tells us, for example, that he was born "about 1755," and was once Lieutenant-Colonel of the North Pevensey Legion of Volunteer Cavalry. Ansther Abbott was the author of *Flora Bedfordiensis*, and the other gentlemen on page one include a mineralogist, two sermonising clergymen, a legal expert, Dr. Abernethy, and a Dr. Adair, whose numerous works include *Unanswerable Objections Against the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (he had a job in the West Indies) and a boldly intituled work, *Essays on Fashionable Diseases*, 8vo, 1790. These specimens attest the scope of the work; but how were the really great men then living treated?

Shelley and Keats were not before the public, and Jane Austen was still anonymous, but we may make

a fair test with Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Leigh Hunt, Lamb, Landor, Peacock, Crabbe, Hogg, and Campbell. The first two, already popular, came off fairly well, though nothing like so well as Sheridan, to whose complicated career pages are devoted. Scott, Walter, Esq., is described as "one of the Clerks of the Court of Session, and Sheriff Deputy for the Shire of Selkirk." Figures of his sales are "subjoined," and under the account of Byron we find this rough, rude sentence:

> It is remarkable that the two first poets of the age should both have been lame from their infancy; yet such is the case with Lord Byron and Mr. Walter Scott.

But what of those who are now considered greater poets? Well, here is Wordsworth's biography, all he gets:

> WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, Esq., late of St. John's College, at Cambridge, and at present distributor of stamps for the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland. This gentleman stands at the head of a particular school of poetry, the characteristic of which is simplicity. His publications are . . .

And all they have to say of Coleridge is:

> COLERIDGE, S. T., a native of Bristol and formerly a member of Jesus College, Cambridge. When the late Sir Alexander Ball was appointed Governor of Malta, Mr. C. went with him in quality of Secretary. He has latterly been engaged in reading lectures on Poetry and the Belles Lettres, and has published . . .

There is no evident malice in this; merely lack of

understanding. As for Blake, he is described as "an eccentric but very ingenious artist, formerly of Hercules Buildings, Lambeth, afterwards living at Feltham, in Sussex, and principally the engraver and publisher of his own designs."

There is no literary criticism in the account of Leigh Hunt, which ends:

> His last speculation was successful, owing to the virulence of its politics, which brought upon him a prosecution for a libel against the Prince Regent, and he is now in confinement in the New Gaol, Horsemonger Lane.

There is a slight touch of pleasure about this. It is, in fact, everywhere evident that the compilers, although they do not resort to boycott, object to extreme politicians. Radical journalists are continually described as "persons," other biographees being usually "gentlemen," and a long life of Cobbett contains the statement that the success of the *Weekly Register*,

> notwithstanding the monotonous political tergiversation and occasional coarseness of the author, has raised Mr. C. to affluence, and enabled him to purchase a valuable estate, at Botley, in Hampshire.

Charles Lamb is dismissed with four lines and a list of works; they know nothing of him except that "he is at present a clerk in the India House," and was at Christ's Hospital. Landor has three lines, which seem to suggest that his career is over. Peacock (who had as yet published only three poorish books) is one of the minority about whom not one biographical fact is given. The Ettrick Shepherd is given a few friendly words, and Crabbe is commended

as "deservedly one of the most distinguished poets of the present day." Of Campbell little is said except that he was given a pension by Lord Grenville for writing political paragraphs. Southey's early revolutionism is decried, but it is handsomely observed that:

> In 1813 he succeeded Mr. Pye as Poet Laureate, and it must be admitted that, with some slight exceptions, his subsequent performances are such as do credit to the appointment.

Hazlitt, as yet unknown as a critic, is barely mentioned.

Whatever the critical references of the work nobody could say it was not lively. Here are a few characteristic entries:

> WILDE, JOHN, Esq., F.R.S., and Professor of Civil Law in the University of Edinburgh. . . . Unfortunately his professional and literary career was closed by a sudden mental derangement which, becoming incurable, he was confined in a private receptacle for lunatics, but out of respect, however, to his talents, he was still suffered to retain nominally his professorship of civil law, and Mr. Irving, the acting lecturer, is obliged to allow him half the salary.
>
> WILLIAMS, HELEN MARIA. This celebrated lady has recently published a volume which, if it does not completely atone for the bad qualities of her former works, will at least entitle her to respect.
>
> MEEKE, Mrs. One of the numerous family of novelists whose prolific genius is always labouring to increase the stock of the circulating libraries. Her performances are . . .
>
> SHIRREFS, ANDREW, M.A., a bookbinder at Aberdeen, who has lost the use of both of his legs.

YATE, WALTER HONYWOOD, Esq., late of St. John's College, Oxford, a Justice of the Peace, and Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Gloucester. This gentleman, though a great enemy to public corruption, and a zealous advocate for Parliamentary reform, was, a few years since, divorced at the suit of his wife, on a charge of adultery and cruelty. He has published . . .

How much brighter *Who's Who* would be if its biographies were built on this model.

REJECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

EDITORS are a variegated lot. Dan Leno was once an editor, so was Mr. C. B. Fry; I have been an editor myself, and amongst my friends there is an editor who is a man with a soft heart. He was exchanging experiences with me this week. He said, and I commended him for it, that he always made a point of himself reading all manuscripts submitted to him.

This is more virtuous than some people might imagine. It might, at first sight, seem obvious that all manuscripts should be read, and all manuscripts would be read, by the person who solicited them and was nominally responsible for selecting the best among them. Ideally, the practice is certainly desirable, and an enthusiast will struggle hard to live up to the ideal. But a little reflection will bring the realisation that to anybody but an enthusiast there is a great temptation to be slack about it, and that even the enthusiast encounters very disheartening obstacles. A man may be extremely keen not to overlook anything worth the printing, and anxious to assist promising and obscure authors, but it takes a lot of disinterested interest and much patience to plough through a daily pile of manuscripts from outside contributors. For many of them are written in difficult hands, many are long articles or stories which are patently intelligent and must be read right through before their merits can be finally estimated, and even of them those which are really suitable for publication in the paper to which they are sent bear a very small proportion to the whole. I cannot say offhand what proportion. But judging from my own

experience of papers which have searched their posts with the utmost eagerness for acceptable work and have been swamped with manuscripts from an educated public, I should say that the accepted or acceptable poems or articles or stories cannot amount to one in a hundred of the unsolicited manuscripts sent in. It is, I gladly agree, worth it. The person who encourages the one in a hundred may be doing excellent service to literature, which is what literary journalists profess to be there for. But it is Serbonian work and the novelty of it soon wears off, as the expectation of miracles fades and the consciousness of probabilities grows.

Some unsolicited manuscripts are mad, some are hopelessly feeble, most are merely amateurishly incompetent. They are probably written by persons who never get into print and whose spark seldom flickers into manuscript. Writers of very occasional poems or stories number thousands, probably hundreds of thousands. An editor in the course of a year will receive great drifts of poems from persons whom he knows and whom he never suspected of writing verses, and who probably conceal their proclivities from their friends pending their recognition by acceptance. These no doubt feel slightly damped—anybody must—when they are turned down with a printed rejection form or even with a friendly, wriggling, disingenuous letter in which laboured compliments and excuses form a very diaphanous covering for the extremely bare fact of rejection. It is a beastly thing, to an imaginative man, this job of systematically throwing cold water on people's aspirations.

On a certain summer evening, when the sky is still green in the west, twenty men and women, graybeards, youths, girls with bobbed hair, march out (or send out) to pillar-boxes with long envelopes addressed to a certain periodical. The envelope goes

into the red jaws, it sticks, it is pushed, it falls plop upon the imagined pile inside, it is irretrievable, and the author goes home wondering what is going to happen this time. A week passes or a month, and then one morning twenty people who have half-forgotten or who live in a perpetual fever of remembrance come down to twenty breakfast-tables to find lying there twenty envelopes addressed in the well-known hands of the recipients. Gloom settles over them. Some have doubts about their own abilities. All have doubts about the abilities, or the honesty, or the carefulness, or the human decency of the editor who has spurned them. It is in an editor's power to give any one of them an hour's happiness (not to mention a guinea or two) or an hour's unhappiness. How hard a choice to make.

I am depressed when I think of any rejected contributor, but I am depressed most of all when I think of the frequently and perennially rejected. The most curious tribe of habitual authors in this country are those who are known only to editors. There are several men in London, a lady in Macclesfield, another in Exeter, whose handwritings, styles, and manners of thought are as well known to half-a-dozen London editors as those of Mr. Hardy, Mr. Arnold Bennett, and Mr. Kipling. They enjoy, or rather they do not enjoy, a kind of subterranean fame. The neighbours of Mr. Noah Davis, of Edgbaston, may or may not know that he writes, but they know him chiefly as a bank clerk or a schoolmaster who is interested in books and wears his hair a little longer than is customary. But in five or six rooms in Fleet Street or Bedford Street, Strand, or the Adelphi nothing is known about him personally except his inmost self, his ambitions, his ideals, his conception of what he can do, his beliefs about love and religion, his vocabulary, his rhythm, and (as I said) his handwriting. There are men, very likely, who have never seen his

face, but who have seen his handwriting two or three hundred times. Nothing deters him. On Monday his poem on *A Level Crossing at Night* goes back to him, and on Thursday arrives his article on *The Organisation of the Provincial Theatre.* Pertinacity like that took Columbus to America, and it will take Mr. Davis nowhere. He cannot know it himself, but everybody who ever sees his work knows it. Nevertheless, he plugs on. "They haven't got accustomed to my thought yet," he reflects, "but even these pudding-heads will see light in time." Back comes the last thing. There is another ready and away it goes. "Dear Sir, I beg to enclose a manuscript entitled Dash, which I hope you will find suitable for publication. If you are unable to use it would you kindly return it. Stamped and addressed envelope enclosed."

Unfortunate Mr. Davis of Edgbaston. Poor Colonel Doggins of Richmond. Sorely-tried Miss Martha Jiminy of Penzance. Gallant but misguided Edgar Chalkhill of Wimbledon, so young, so keen, so immature, so patently incapable of maturity! Some of them keep return envelopes on which their addresses are printed; whether to impress or to save the labour of writing I do not know. But every morning on the desks of which I am thinking a communication from at least one of their brotherhood reposes. It will be looked at with a weary eye, and it will go the way of all its predecessors. For the manuscripts of some authors are like homing pigeons. You may release them wherever you like, but they will make straight back for the familiar cote.

A TRICK OF MEMORY

I MADE a slip and blush to find it fame. A fortnight ago I happened to be writing about an Indian poem on the cuckoo. In parenthesis I referred to the well-known poem beginning:

> Bird of the wilderness
> Blithesome and cumberless,

and said, unthinkingly, that it was an apostrophe to the cuckoo. It was really addressed to the skylark. Needless to say, an admirer of the poem popped up with a letter to the editor denouncing me as an ignoramus. I'm not quite sure that it was my *lapsus calami* which chiefly annoyed this correspondent. What he really disliked was the fact that I had laid rude hands on one of his favourite poems. Of this I do not repent. I admire the author of the poem, and I admire parts of the poem itself. But "cumberless" appears to me a very cumbersome word; a word even more inappropriate to the lark than to the cuckoo. I don't mind betting that had I or any poor contemporary addressed the lark as "cumberless" not one person but a hundred people would write letters of criticism couched in the harshest terms. I maintain that "blithesome and cumberless" is an abominable line. But in so doing I am not attempting to draw a red herring across the main trail, or to lead readers into the delusion that I have answered the charge levelled against me of having stated that bird in that poem was a cuckoo. The bird was not a cuckoo. It was a lark. I said it was a cuckoo. I was a cuckoo for saying it. I noticed the error when too

late. I went red in the face when the mistake was exposed by that irate correspondent. And I went red all over when it was given a still wider publicity, put in the pillory and exposed to the eggs and carrots of the world, by *Punch*.

However, I shall survive. I do not take lapses of the pen, the tongue, or the memory very seriously. I should not like to pepper every page I ever write with errors of fact. But I am resigned to their occasional occurrence, and I am as charitable to them in others as I wish others to be when I make them myself. There are errors and errors. If I stated boldly that *Hamlet* was written in prose and in bad prose, it would be obvious either that my mind had so weakened that I ought to post straight off to Harley Street, or else that I had never read the play but was pretending to have read it. A Scotch paper once perpetrated a sentence which was stuffed full of the sort of errors which really do deserve condemnation and should permanently disfranchise their perpetrators in the critical sphere. It was reviewing a Selection from the poems of Francis Thompson, and said:

> We do not think that any selection from the work of the Author of the *Seasons* can be considered really representative which contains no extracts from his best-known poem, *The City of Dreadful Night*."

Had I written that and been exposed I really should hide a head not ordinarily "diminished," but shrunken to the size of a hazel-nut. But surely, surely, my poor error was not of that kind? Surely I may advance, and with more cogency than she could, the defence of the maid-servant in *Midshipman Easy* that her offspring was "only a very little one"? And above all it was on the subject of the cuckoo, the bird of mocking, the feathered

leg-puller, whose note in our Elizabethan literature is always an ironic echo, the bird which evoked what perhaps was the most masterful definition in our language. I am in the company of the unfortunate wight who, quite without meaning it, said that "the cuckoo is a bird which does not lay its own eggs." And I am in a larger company than that. I do not know that I ever heard a story about a cuckoo, a story in which the word "cuckoo" occurred, the point of which was not some ridiculous blunder. There is, for example, the story (there always is) about the curate. He was invited to an immense house-party at a duchess's. At tea on the afternoon of his arrival he did not speak; his nervousness was painfully evident. Nor did he speak during the interval between tea and dinner. Nor during dinner could the assistance of two charming neighbours and the auxiliary resources of his anxious hostess produce from him anything but blushes and nervous tremblings. When the meal was over the ladies prolonged their stay for the sake of helping him to start. At last hope was given up; but just as the hostess was rising his mouth was observed to be shaping itself towards some end, and there was a hasty resettlement. All listened anxiously, endeavouring to mask their painfully solicitous concentration. At last he broke the silence. "The c-c-cuckoo," he said, "is a m-much larger bird than you would s-s-suppose." There is also the story of the tearful child who brought back the cuckoo clock with the bitter complaint that it ood before it cucked.

I made a mistake. But the wind that blew in was not altogether evil in its effects. For I have finished considerably less ignorant than I started. Not about poetry, but about cuckoos. For in the course of composing this explanation I resorted to the dictionaries, and dictionaries always leave one richer. I began with all the foreign names of the cuckoo—coucou,

kokkux, cuculus, kokild, kuckuk, koekoek. I then learnt (though this I fear I shall not retain) that the Cuculidæ are zygodactyl and desmognathous. But then I came to the slang definition: "a fool," "a gowk." It suddenly occurred to me: if I look up "gowk" shall I simply see "a cuckoo," "a fool"? So I looked up "gowk," and found to my intense astonishment that it originally actually meant a cuckoo, being derived from the Icelandic name for the bird. How many people who call other people gowks know that they are calling them cuckoos? This is a fact worth making mistakes for. The rest are not quite so thrilling, and I have no space to tabulate them all. But it is something to have started, or added to, one's store of erudition concerning the cuckoo-bee, the cuckoo-falcon, the cuckoo-fly, the cuckoo-shrike, cuckoo-spit (also known as toad-spittle and frog-spit). I turn the page and come to cucumber mildew and the cucumber flea beetle. Good-bye, I am going to spend the evening with the letter "C."

ON BEING A JONAH

I HAVE never much cared for the minor prophets, as men. Circumstances, of course, were against them. They fell upon evil times, and it was their duty—one sometimes beats down the suspicion that it was also their pleasure—to spend most of their time denouncing those who offered up burnt sacrifices in high places or walked in the way of the children of iniquity. Their forefingers were fixed in the posture of accusation, and their favourite monosyllable was "Woe." They were disinterested men, but brooding, angry, vehement, sometimes soured, men. Amongst them all I have always felt least sympathy for the prophet Jonah. A certain compassion with him in his submarine period we must all, no doubt, have felt. But he is not an attractive character. His vindictiveness against the Ninevites was extreme. I have not my Bible with me, but I seem to remember that he was disappointed when they were not all extirpated: Jehovah was too merciful for him. A morose, splenetic, fanatical, black-avised man.

I feel a little closer to Jonah now than I did. They say that men, the survivors from some great shared enterprise or calamity, are bound together by a comradeship of experience. It is so; millions of soldiers can attest the fact. It is something of this kind that has drawn me closer to the prophet Jonah. Contact has been established. We have suffered alike, and we have something in common. Now I hasten to add that I have not been swallowed by a whale. Nor do I expect to be. Palmists who have examined my clerkly hand have predicted many and various fates for me, numerous early deaths in the

most diverse circumstances, deaths by field and flood, ship and railway. But not even a palmist—and palmists stop at little—has ever told me that I should, mortally or otherwise, lodge in the belly of a great fish. It is not this; it is the immediately prior experience that has, though by proxy, befallen me.

I discovered that one of my works had for some weeks been out of print. I asked my publisher why this was. His answer took the form of a file of correspondence received by him. The first letter (as this is not an advt. I suppress the name of the book) was from a firm of printers in Scotland. It ran:

> Dear Sir,
>
> We have received a communication from the —— Shipping Company —— informing us that the s.s. ——, which sailed on the 20th inst., has been aground and that a portion of the cargo had been jettisoned. We despatched by this boat the undernoted on your account, and shall be glad to know at your earliest, if any or part of it has been received.

The undernoted consisted of a thousand copies of me. Inquiries followed; a letter passed the other way; and a second communication came from Caledonia:

> Dear Sirs,
>
> We are in receipt of your letter of January 2nd, and regret to hear that the 5 bales have been jettisoned, which confirms the report we have received.
>
> We are sorry to say they were not insured by us.

And finally, the binders woke up. They, too, apparently, had been all agog to receive my works; looking forward to binding them. But they were men accustomed to concealing their emotions, typically

English, reluctant to make demonstrations of sorrow or wear their hearts on their sleeves. The letter ran:

Dear Mr. ——,

The 5 Bales of above have been thrown overboard we have found out.

Yours faithfully,

. . . . . .

There ended the dossier.

I have endeavoured, lying awake in the darkness, to reconstruct the scene. The sailors, I think, were slightly dubious about Jonah from the first day out. They thought there was something a little sinister about him. He was not "simpatico," not (as the Esperantists so compactly put it) "samideano." That first day out of port they looked at him with sidelong eyes, and wondered whether they wouldn't have preferred a black cat or a Friday sailing. The second day they thought seriously of dumping him into a barrel of pork in order to express their dislike and distrust. The third day, as you will see, there was nearly a mutiny over the fatal five bales of incomprehensible books. Similarly, I conceive that these mariners, who out of all that cargo selected my works for sacrifice when the moment for sacrifice came, had scented in them something they disliked from the start.

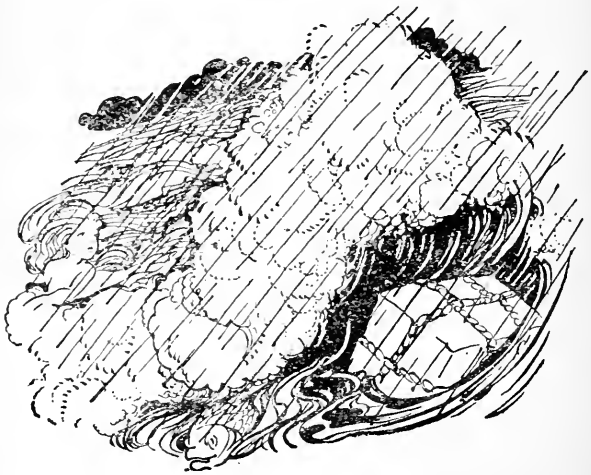
The steamer, I think, was going down the Firth of Forth, in a dead calm, with the black smoke lying flat and thick behind her, when some idle seaman, clambering over the cargo, came upon those five bales and wondered what they contained. One of them had a slight rent through which protruded a glaring yellow cover. Ben Gunn, or Ole Petersen, yielded, tugged, and began to peruse. He shifted his quid, and knitted his brows; he uttered a full-flavoured

nautical equivalent of Stevenson's young man's exclamation on seeing the old *Athenæum:* "Golly, what a paper!" Very gingerly he stuffed my incomprehensible compositions back into the sack, and went to ruminate. At evening in the fo'c'sle he grumbled to his mates that there was something unlucky on board, gibberish in what looked like English and bore some resemblance to verse. All along the Lothian and Berwick coast when darkness fell the watch cast glances of malediction upon those sacks, whose canvas faintly shone in the lantern light.

The wind freshened. It rained. The wind whistled. It sleeted. The wind roared. The sea rose. Lurching and pitching she went ahead, drifting shorewards, shipping water at every roll. Through the mirk could be descried a lee shore, cliffs, one or two misty lights. "We must lighten or ——" shouted the captain to the first officer. "Aye, aye, sir," replied the first officer to the captain. "Is there any cargo with which the world could easily dispense?" asked the captain. "Yes, sir," said the first officer: "there are many volumes of Herbert Spencer, ten crates of gramophones, and the collected edition of Mr. —— ——'s speeches." "I like them all," said the captain. "Please suggest something else." At this point the conversation was cut into and so was the Gordian knot. A bronzed and bearded sailor staggered up; holding on to the taffrail with one hand and touching his forelock with the other, he explained that the crew refused to do another hand's turn unless five bales of books by Squire were thrown overboard. "We knew, sir," said he, "that there was suthin' fishy about them books the moment they come aboard. This ship won't come to no good until they be over the side." There was no argument. The unhappy books, speechless themselves, had no defenders. Ten men with glittering eyes and bared teeth crawled towards them, two to a bale.

They seized them, and with a last vengeful curse flung them far out into the maw of an advancing wave. A thousand copies! Down they fell, through the boiling wrath of the sea's surface, into the more equable waters below, and, in zigzag shift, settled to the sandy bottom. There they lie at this moment, in the little depressions they have made. It is a fine day and something of sunlight filters down to them. One of the sacks has burst open and its fatigued contents have tumbled out; shut, gaping, open wide, face upwards, face downwards. Odd corners of print can be seen; and at intervals through the opaque green a phantom fish glides up and, with staring eyes, slowly wagging its fins and gills, gapes at this pile of indigestible matter. Then he goes away. And I, for one, don't blame him.

But I have my consolations. Those ruffians may have thrown me overboard. But it did not save them. They were wrecked.



REAL PEOPLE IN BOOKS

THE other day I met an acquaintance who looked unusually depressed. Depressed is perhaps scarcely the word: in his air was a mixture of resignation, sadness, and reproach, reproach born rather of sorrow than of anger. "Well," said his expression, "I didn't think you'd do it, and possibly you didn't know you would hurt me. But it was a careless blow, and though I have far more courage and stoicism than you think, I shall not easily recover from it." If his expression did not say all that, it should have said it. It was not, I was happy to feel, addressed to me; from me he sought rather consolation, those sweet lies which have been balm to many a wound. He had been badly hurt.

An old friend, a practising novelist, had put him into a novel. He was not the villain of the novel; far from it, he was, if anything, one of the heroes; he appeared very little and did several kind deeds. He was described as handsome, honourable, rich, moral; and a hundred attributes were bestowed on him, the imputation of which could be resented by no sensible man. But the portrait was a recognisable one, and among the most accurate things about it were the indications of vices, or of weaknesses scarcely worthy of that name: let us say dislike of mental discomfort, unpunctuality, a slight defect of will. It was impossible to deny that the portrait, where it was not just, was flattering. Yet it was resented, as I think a truly faithful portrait by a friend would be resented by any man. It was resented as not merely unkind (for one's friends should spare one) but unfair. And the notion of unfairness was

easily traceable by an examination of my own breast. It was unfair, the victim felt, to depict any fault as a friend's fixed characteristic. For what are our faults? Not, to ourselves, permanent elements in us; at least not things necessarily permanent. They are rather smudges on a pane, cobwebs in a corner, which we could (and which we may) remove to-morrow if we liked. We may not think it worth while—for the moment—to pull ourselves together; but all the pride of our unique personality rises in anger when the suggestion is made that the smudge is a flaw in the glass, the cobweb a part of the fabric. It is cruel to pin a man down in this way; he hates to feel that there he is, with a description in print from which he will be unable to escape, which will hang like a millstone around his neck; the whole world, as it were, conspiring to prevent him from changing. The least our friends can do is to refrain from telling, and especially from writing, the truth about us.

At best, to those who feel that decent behaviour is more important than any book, using real people as characters is a dangerous business. In the instance to which I refer I think no act was imputed to the character which he had not committed; but even that did not prevent the wound. We must admit that novelists and playwrights may, always will, usually must, make use of the personalities of people whom they know. Not invariably. If a man writes a play about Nero he does not look around amongst his friends, however Neronic many of them may be, to find a model for his principal character: he knows enough about Nero, though he never saw him, to give his imagination a starting point. He has a face, and the main features of the type and the individual: he wants to borrow nothing from A the journalist or B who lives in the Albany. But where contemporary fiction is concerned, though

there have been novelists whose brains generated purely invented people as well as derivative people, it is an immense aid, whatever sort of person is being described, to bear (at the start at all events) a particular human being in mind. It is an obligation on the man who does this to disguise his character beyond recognition where there is the least possibility of offence: unless his whole purpose be offence.

There have been in our day a great many novels in which men and women one knew, or knew about, have appeared with no attempt at disguise: sometimes with every effort to ensure identification. There are living politicians, painters, authors, who are known to many people only through their alleged portraits in books. Novelists have contracted so habitually the custom of making things easy for themselves and securing a cheap pungency by drawing on their knowledge of Mr. Snook, R.A., Sir John Pigment, or Lady Jane Dolt, that many readers, when they get a new novel of the "mœurs contemporaines" kind, ask as they meet each fresh character, "I wonder who this is meant for?" We continually find, within a week of a new novel's appearance, a rumour running round London to the effect that So-and-So is in it to the life or that So-and-So gets it hot. This in a fiction is not the game, and the more realistic and convincing the fiction the worse it is. A man is introduced: his face, clothes, house, family, profession, achievements are precisely described; his gestures and the very accents of his voice are reproduced; and he is carried through a series of actions of which some are totally fictitious and others are copied from actions he is known to have performed. This is unpardonable: it is simply telling lies about a real person, lies which, if they sound likely enough, may cause not merely pain but serious practical embarrassment.

For me I should, I freely confess, be hurt if a friend,

and annoyed if anybody else, set me truthfully down without imputing to me anything false. I should be furious if I were, in a recognisable way, described and represented as doing things, obviously piggish or merely not to my taste, which a stranger or an acquaintance might pardonably suppose that I had done. The one sort of work in which I, or any man, need not mind being described, however accurately, and carried through actions, however unlikely, is a thoroughgoing shocker. Much as I should loathe appearing "under a thin disguise" as seducing somebody or indulging in wholesale backbiting (things not uncommon and liable to be believed of any man to whom they are imputed), I should not mind in the least if a novelist painted me as vividly as possible, made identification certain, even spelt my name backwards, or even spelt it forwards, if he made his story obviously false. He could take me and do what he liked with me: make me emulate the hero of the "Brides in Bath" story, run a baby farm, blow up the Houses of Parliament, or accumulate a fortune by burglary or the abstraction of pennies from blind men's tins. These crimes are not merely crimes that I have not committed and have not (I most earnestly assure you) any intention of committing; but they are crimes which nobody who knew of my existence (and the others are not in question) would suppose me to have committed. Murders and highway robberies galore may be saddled upon my counterfeit presentment: I shall not merely not mind, but I shall (so strange is the constitution of the human mind) be openly pleased. But the deeds that I might conceivably commit and don't: from the suggestion of these God save me, and us all. It does not matter being the subject of a fairy-tale, but it is most disagreeable to be the subject of scandalous gossip.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA

I OPENED a book casually and began reading an essay on Frederic the Great of Prussia, once known to these islands as "The Protestant Hero," given a new vogue by Carlyle, but at present somewhat under a cloud owing to the perpetuation of the worst of his proclivities in his descendants. Suddenly I came upon a passage about his literary compositions; certain of them were commended, but not his poems. "Nobody," ran the curt sentence, "can now read his verses."

How rash such statements are! It would hardly be safe to assert that nobody can now read Rollin, Sir Richard Blackmore, or the encyclopædia of Vincent of Beauvais. "Very few can read . . . ," "it is not easy to conceive that anybody can read . . . ," "the man must have plenty of time to waste who reads . . . ," "he must be an eccentric fool who reads . . .": all these openings would be quite safe in reference to hosts of old books. But the man who confidently writes "nobody can now read" does so at his risk. As I saw those dogmatic words my soul uprose in pride. "I can," it said, "and, what's more, I have." The answer was accurate and complete. I once read Frederic's poems, I found a mild pleasure in reading them, and I have now, under this adventitious incentive, been looking at them again.

I don't mean to say that I hunted for them, or that I wasn't happy until I got them. I could have lived my life quite at my ease without ever catching a glimpse of them. It was pure accident that brought

into my hands a copy of Frederic's poems, and I should probably never have looked at them had I not possessed a copy of my own. I picked it up in the sixpenny box of a bookseller who did not know them for what they were, as there is no author's name on the title-page. The book is rather remarkable. The title is *Poesies Diverses*, and the edition was published in Berlin in 1760 by Christian Frederic Voss. The royal author, or his publisher, spared no expense. The volume is a handsome quarto, gilt edged; the paper is good and the print handsome; and the pages are embellished with decorations on the best French models of the time. It was the great age of copper-plate pictures, and the German artists, Meil and Schmidt, did their Teutonic best to follow in the footsteps of the French masters. The frontispiece is a full-page engraving of a nude and bearded person with vast thews, sitting on a rock at a cave's entrance, and contemplatively playing a seven-stringed lyre. There are tailpieces full of musical instruments, goddesses, cupids, clouds, clarions, and Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses languorously reclining amid sylvan bowers, and there are really charming initials everywhere. But where the artist —in this instance, Schmidt—really laid himself out (no doubt, under instruction) was in the big series of engravings illustrating L'Art de la Guerre. The armoured prince is shown in every stage of operation. He is crowned with laurel, he is girded by Bellona, he directs an attack on a town amid a hail of large cannon-balls, he examines a map, he surveys his hosts from a hill, he leads them into a city, and he reclines on a sofa with his spouse, whilst his young prattlers pull off his boots. And this, on the whole, is Frederic's most interesting poem.

He wrote twenty epistles and a number of odes, including some addressed to Gresset, Maupertuis, and Voltaire, whom he addresses as

Fils d'Apollon, Homere de la France.

They all have a certain flavour of personality about them, but it is in the art of war that one naturally finds most piquancy, and it is the most ambitious of Frederic's efforts. It is in six cantos; a sort of solemn, extended monologue, full of scraps of history, sketches of operations, and elevated sentiments. A certain amount is talked about glory. It comes into the peroration, and it comes at the beginning, where the "young Prince" is exhorted:

écoutez les leçons d'un soldat,
Qui formé dans les camps, nourri dans les allarmes,
Vous appelle à la Gloire, et vous instruit aux armes.

But Frederic is not to be taken as a militarist. He has seen too much of "ces ravages sanglans," and he urges the General to control his soldiers, and calls maledictions on the cruel commander who plunders and ravages and permits wanton carnage. No:

Je ne vous offre point Attila pour modèle;
Je veux un Heros juste, un Tite, un Marc Aurele . . .
Tombent tous les lauriers du front de la Victoire,
Plutôt que l'injustice en ternisse la gloire.

It is extraordinary how Attila seems to haunt the Hohenzollern imagination.

Frederic's poems are certainly prosaic as a rule. But they are not alone in their dullness in that century, and they are less dull than some; I don't find Armstrong's *Art of Preserving Health*, once so celebrated, as lively. Frederic wrote the uninspired, argumentative discourses and the formal apostrophes common in his time both in France and England. His collected works in verse and prose fill many volumes; the prose is said to be good, and the

reasoning sometimes acute. Whatever the literary value of his work, I imagine that he was the most prolific writer who has ever sat on a European throne. "A long time ago the world began"; Marcus Aurelius was a great writer, and I dare say the compositions of King Alfred were very remarkable for their period. But royal poets since then have been more numerous than fertile; and we may fairly say that, with the exception of James I. of Scotland, who wrote the *King's Quair*, no modern sovereign has taken the job of writing verse more seriously. In fact, to the best of my remembrance—though I am rather hazy about all the Stanislases and Wenceslases of the old Polish and Bohemian realms—there is no near rival to him.

Certainly our own English monarchs do not compete. A few verses apiece are ascribed to many of them. Cœur de Lion is reputed to have written a Provençal song lamenting that he had spent two winters unransomed in prison; possibly he got Blondel to write it for him. To Edward II. is ascribed a Latin poem complaining of his lot, and to Henry VI. an English one on the theme, *Kingdoms are but Cares*, and there are some grounds for ascribing to Henry VIII. a group of lyrics. The best is *Pastime with Good Company*. There is also one beginning:

> As the holly groweth green,
> And never changeth hue,
> So am I, and ever have been,
> Unto my lady true.

I can only say that if he really wrote that and read it to his courtiers, they must have found it rather difficult to control their faces. Edward VI. is credited with a longish poem arguing about the Eucharist, and his sister Elizabeth with several vigorous lyrics, including one about Mary Queen of Scots, "the

daughter of debate that discord aye doth sow." Of James VI. and I., the British Solomon, there is no doubt. He published two volumes of verse, one of which (1584) was called *The Essays of a Prentise*, and his collected works in verse and prose were published in 1616. If only his sonnets were as racy as his *Counterblast to Tobacco*, they would be worth having. Charles II., if he really wrote *I Pass All My Hours*, which has been imputed to him, would have employed himself well in writing more. With the Stuarts our literary monarchs apparently ended; the poems of George III., and William IV. if they wrote any, have never seen the light.

AUTHORS' RELICS

All civilisations have cherished relics. There is nothing wrong in that. The superficially logical may put up a case against it, but the student of reality will think it right that men should thus express their proper affections and useful that they should thus minister to the sense of tradition. I think, however, that the passion for relics may be carried too far. Some things are more significant than others, and a few things suffice. Shakespeare's fine tooth comb would not greatly appeal to me except as a specimen of Tudor workmanship, and when we come to the combs of persons vastly inferior to Shakespeare I feel moved to protest.

The occasion of these remarks is the issue of a catalogue of the Samuel Butler collection preserved in St. John's College, Cambridge. Butler was an eminent, if perverse and eccentric, man. He was educated (as I happen to have been myself) at a college which produced Wordsworth, Herrick, Prior, Sir Thomas Wyat, Greene, Southampton, Burghley, Strafford, Falkland, Palmerston, and divers others. Owing to Mr. Festing Jones's enthusiasm the college has converted an old cloak-room into a Butler museum; and the contents of this are now displayed before us. The collection at St. John's is certainly extraordinarily comprehensive. Butler's *Life* was remarkable as being more detailed, almost, than any *Life* that ever was written. Mr. Jones not merely let one into the most intimate and the most commonplace records of the Sage's daily life, but he went so far as to give us precise and detailed statements

of the contents of the various sizes of portmanteaux that Butler took away with him (*a*) for a week-end, (*b*) for a visit to Shropshire, and (*c*) for a trip to the Continent. The clothes, the hair-brushes, the tooth-brushes, and even the tonics and digestive pills were all solemnly catalogued and enumerated. The collection at St. John's is similarly exhaustive.

There is no Wordsworth collection at St. John's, though the famous Pickersgill portrait of the poet sitting (with a red nose) on a rock and watching a pastoral landscape, hangs in the hall, and undergraduates every night swig their beer under it. There is no Herrick collection: it would be difficult to form one: when you have the first edition of the *Hesperides* you have pretty well everything that is to be got. No room is set apart for Matthew Prior, the largest paper copy of whose 1718 collected edition is in itself sufficiently bulky to fill a small room. But Butler had a faithful disciple. Butler was preserved. Butler is to be immortalised. And the relics of Butler which have been deposited at St. John's beat for variety and number any such accumulation of mementoes to be found in the world, even at Stratford.

We start with pictures, sketches and drawings by or relating to Samuel Butler. Butler was a dabbler in painting as in every other art: his picture of *Heatherley's Studio* hangs in the Tate, and is well worthy of place there or in any other public gallery. He did a great number of pictures, studies and sketches. When he died some were given to elementary schools, some to the British Museum, and some to his friends, amongst whom ranked Alfred Cathie, his astonishing man-servant. Mr. Jones's and Alfred's have gone to St. John's, as also many of Butler's snap-shots and his "camera lucida," which he hoped at one time would do half his sketching work for him. The paintings at St. John's are

none of them equal to the fine picture at the Tate: they are mostly daubs of Italian scenes, many of them suitable for illustrations to Butler's work on the *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont*. Next we come to books and music written by Butler, from an article in the college magazine for the Lent term of 1858 to the 1920 French translation of *Erewhon*, and including the interesting MS. of his notebooks; these are rounded off thoroughly with Mr. Festing Jones's *Life*, of which the college possesses the first, second and third manuscripts, the proofs, the revises, the advance copy and everything else. Next come books and articles about Butler, and then books which belonged to Butler: who had, as he said "the smallest library of any man in London who is by way of being literary." Butler's Bible, given to him by his godmother, appears here, and (delicious thing) the *Life of Dr. Arnold*, which Butler bought when he was writing his *Life* of his grandfather "because he was told that it was a model biography of a great schoolmaster." Descending the scale we come to Butler's maps, including various reduced ordnance maps of parts of England: that of the South Environs of London is inscribed "S. Butler, 15, Clifford's Inn, Fleet Street, London, E.C. Please return to the above address. The finder, if poor, will be rewarded; if rich, thanked." Butler's Music collection was, as one would have expected, composed almost entirely of works by Handel: the "Miscellaneous papers" are more varied. They include the collection of testimonials which Butler submitted when, in 1886, he was candidate for the Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Cambridge, various comic newspaper cuttings kept by Butler, a collection of obituary notices of Butler, and the "Menu of Dinner given to Henry Festing Jones on the completion of the *Memoir*." Here we are distinctly coming down to details. And after going through various boxes of

photographic negatives and a collection of photographs of Butler's family and friends, we come to "Effects: Formerly the Personal Property of Samuel Butler." Here are some of these effects:

One mahogany table with two flaps.
Butler used this table for his meals, for his writing, and for all purposes to which a table can be put.
Sandwich case.
This he took with him on his Sunday walks and sketching excursions.
Passport.
Pocket magnifying glass.
Address book.
Homeopathic medicine case.
He always took this with him on his travels.
Two pen trays.
One tin water-bottle for sketching.
One sloping desk.
One pair of chamois horns given to him by Dionigri Negri at Varallo Sesia.
One handle and webbing in which he carried his books to and from the British Museum.
One bust of Handel.
Bag for pennies.
Two small Dutch dolls.
A brass bowl my brother Edward brought from India.
The matchbox which Alfred gave to Butler.

It is pretty thorough. I miss Butler's pyjamas, which are totally unrepresented; and no collection of the kind can be deemed quite complete without some sample nail-parings, some boots, a piece of toast incised by the hero's teeth, and a few studs. There is not even a lock of Butler's hair here. Nevertheless, as I said, it is as varied a collection of the

kind as exists. And it is strange that all these relics should have reverently been brought together, placed in a Cambridge college, and dedicated to the memory of one who spent his whole life attempting to reason people out of what he considered their absurd sentimentalism. On Butler's own principles his relics should have been buried with him. But disciples will be disciples, and his disciples were wiser than he.

THE LIBRARIAN'S HARD LOT

It is commonly assumed that the chief Librarian of a place like the Bodleian or the British Museum has nothing whatever to do. He has gone through his period of storm and stress. He has catalogued; he has sorted out the new accessions; he has fetched and carried for readers; but at last he has been (as men in so many spheres are reputed to be) promoted beyond the dust and trampling, into a region like that of the lotus-eaters where no labour is demanded and the fat fruits of the salary tree drop ripe into the lazily opened mouth. This prevalent misconception has at last stirred Bodley's Librarian to indignation. In the current number of the *Bodleian Quarterly Record* there is an account of what all Bodley's servants, from highest to lowest, have to do; and the list of duties is so terrifying that I feel, to use Sir Andrew Aguecheek's terminology, that I had as lief be a Puritan as a librarian.

There is plenty of work for the Chief's assistants. The Sub-Librarians are compiling a "Summary Catalogue of Western MSS.," begun in 1890; some of the manuscripts are still to be found described only in a catalogue, which may be reasonably considered out of date, printed in 1697. Assistants are on the spot at nine in the morning (when you, reader, are having your tea and biscuits in bed) sorting out the books and letters, entering the acquisitions in a numerical register, examining booksellers' catalogues. What time the Chief Librarian arrives is not stated, but he has so much to do that 5 a.m. by the early workmen's tram should about meet the case. Here

is a summary of some of the complex of calls that are made on him:

Bodley's Librarian takes charge of the entire internal administration of the Library. He assigns duties to the staff, undertakes the more important part of his official correspondence, signs all orders and acknowledgments of donations and copyright accessions, decides on the purchase of MSS. and printed books, deals with suggestions of readers, settles questions touching repairs, accommodation for readers, furniture, boilers, fuel, lavatories, and all such domestic matters. He is also much concerned with accounts, in which he is assisted by a special Assistant. The financial condition of the Library is always precarious ("annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six"). Fortunately things *do* occasionally "turn up," and for a time the Library rises superior to its difficulties. The Librarian confers daily with the staff about their duties, and he is readily accessible to those of the Junior Staff who wish to consult him about their future. His reputation as an Orientalist brings inquiries from all parts of the world, not only about his own special languages—Hebrew, Samaritan, Arabic, and Hittite—but concerning all the other Eastern languages, those of the Turks, Persians, Abyssinians, and, for aught I know, of the peoples who dwell in Bacharia, Moretane, Abchaz, "and the Isle of Pentexoire, that is the land of Prester John." The Librarian is also compiling a Catalogue of the Collection of Hebrew books, which is probably the finest in the world. For this undertaking his axiom is, "Nulla dies sine linea." At the moment the most perplexing problem with which he has to deal is the finding of shelf-room in the Bodleian Building for accessions of older works and special collections

such as the Backhouse Chinese Collection, and in this connexion it must be remembered that there are special difficulties (*e.g.*, in securing adequate lighting, strength of floors, etc.) in adapting an old building to modern needs.

But this does not finish it, for there is the correspondence.

The correspondence is opened by the Librarian. That is to say such of it as reaches him. It is conceivable that some of it never does. For what does is inscribed to such a variety of erroneous addresses that it cannot but be supposed that there are many letters which completely beat even our ingenious Post Office. That intelligent department has duly delivered to the Bodleian letters addressed to "The Hon. Chairman of the Greek Library," "Signor Library of College and University," "The Directory of the Collection of Holly Bibles," "The Library, College, Oxford," and the name of the institution has appeared as Blodeian, Bodeia, Bodderian, Bodlei Ave, Mogleyan, Bodiliean, Bodleland, Bodbian, Bookian, Bibliothèque Boddeienne, Bibliothèque Bodleisse, and Rodleian Library, Sheffield Oxford. It may be imagined that correspondents who show such eccentricity in their addresses write letters which are equally original and sometimes equally puzzling. There are, of course, perfectly sensible inquiries (in stacks) about books and MSS. in the library, applications to take photographs, to exchange literature, to read on the premises. But there are others less straightforward. Many people (who usually say they are "fond of books") write for jobs; many (who have been known to describe their wares by giving their weights in lbs. and ozs.) wish to sell old books, usually worthless; and many ask questions. Here are some of the questions and demands which have recently come to this hard-worked

gentleman who has such a mass of work to do, let alone looking after the coals and the lavatories:

> Did Wesley ever meet or converse with William Pitt during the time that Wesley was Fellow of Lincoln?
>
> [To settle a golfing bet] which of the following is correct, "If a match fails to keep its place on the green" or "If a match fail to keep its place on the green?"
>
> Is the acacia tree in my garden the first one planted in England?
>
> I beg of you to send me the complete catalogues of your libraries, publications, etc. Kindly ask all the bibliographical, catalogue, Directory and reference book publishers of Britain and Europe to send me their complete catalogues. You may please circulate this P.C. among the librarians and Chancellors of all the British Universities for attention. Please ask all the chief librarians of all the European libraries to do the same for me. Kindly name and ask all the oriental publishers and oriental institutes of Britain and Europe to send me their catalogues and journals. An early compliance.

On top of this a hundred thousand readers a year enter the Library, and continual rearrangement is necessary, which means at present the regrouping of about an eighth of a million books per annum. "For the successful shifting, incorporation and allocation of room for growth of large sections of books," says the Librarian plaintively, "a considerable capacity for organisation is essential; muscle is also desirable." This work of porterage, at least, the Librarian does not do himself.

I shall never again regard the Bodleian as a home of rest. I am not an Oxford man, but I have often

passed those mouldering heads of the Cæsars and walked into the ancient quadrangle of the Bodleian thinking it the quietest place in the world. The green turf, the crumbling stone walls, the little old doorways, the ancient lettering: I have stood there, with none but myself looking, and ruminated that here above all I had found a "haunt of ancient peace." It has seemed that inside (I have never been inside) there could be nothing but ancient medical and theological treatises, huge Bibles chained to desks, crabbed manuscripts of antique scholarship, and drowsy spectacled old men keeping what only courtesy could call a watch over them. How false a vision! No beehive is the scene of more frenzied industry; no council table, no Stock Exchange beholds more frantic rendings of hair, more heart-burnings, more bewilderment, more chafing at the maddening stupidity of things and men. Even at this moment Bodley's Librarian is probably sitting there trying to answer some ridiculous question about Napoleon or miserably writing to inform some illiterate Baboo that he cannot be made Keeper of English Verse, whilst his brain reels at the thunder of the multitudes of thronging readers and the trucks conveying books from one unknown destination to another. I at least will never do a great librarian an injustice again.

DISRAELI'S WIT

I AM one of those who like calendars containing brief bits of "wit and wisdom culled" from eminent writers: though nothing is more horrible than a collection of such cullings from a writer who is not good enough. I opened, therefore, with some curiosity *The Disraeli Calendar*, put together by Mrs. Henry Head, who has demonstrated her gifts as a selector before this. I was not sure that I should like so much Disraeli in brief bits: it might be thin. But my fears were ungrounded, and the book should do something to assist that recovery of Disraeli's reputation as a writer which began when the first volume of the Monypenny biography recalled attention to him.

The volume contains extracts from his letters and a fair number of passages illustrating his habitual manner of thought and his occasional genuine moods. There is a touch of sincerity about the romantic view of the Tory Party on the first page. We can hear Disraeli thinking in this passage from *Endymion*: "Great men should think of Opportunity, and not of Time. Time is the excuse of feeble and puzzled spirits. They make Time the sleeping partner of their lives to accomplish what ought to be achieved by their own will. . . . Power, and power alone, should be your absorbing object, and all the accidents and incidents of life should only be considered with reference to that main result." We have here the ambitious Disraeli's declaration that "the time will come," and the reflective Disraeli in the bitter passage on Progress which ends with the Inge-like remark

that "the European talks of progress, because, by an ingenious application of some scientific arguments, he has established a society which has mistaken comfort for civilisation." We do not get here—I don't think we get anywhere—anything like the whole Disraeli: but we are given illustrations of all those aspects which he showed the world.

But the compiler of this Calendar, having as her prime object the production of an amusing book, has not confined herself, or even devoted her main attention, to extracts which illustrate the various sides of Dizzy's character, his political thought, or his power as a novelist; half her quotations are squibs and mots. They are often very good, always tersely expressed, and any one who examines the following specimens will, I think, easily identify the type to which they belong:

> Lord and Lady Mountjoy, . . . unfortunate people, who, with a large fortune, lived in a wrong square, and asked to their house everybody who was nobody.
>
> "Does your Highness take snuff?" "Thank you, no; I've left off snuff ever since I passed a winter at Baffin's Bay. You've no idea how very awkward an accidental sneeze is near the pole."
>
> "It is very immoral, and very unfair," said Lord Milford, "that any man should marry for tin who does not want it."
>
> "They say primroses make a capital salad," said Lord St. Jerome.
>
> Time has brought us substitutes, but how inferior! Man has deified corn and wine! but not even the Chinese or the Irish have raised temples to tea and potatoes.
>
> How these rooks bore! I hate staying with ancient families, you're always cawed to death.
>
> Her features were like those conceptions of

Grecian sculpture which, in moments of despondency, we sometimes believe to be ideal.

I hate a straightforward fellow. As Pinto says, if every man were straightforward in his opinion, there would be no conversation.

A coquette is a being who wishes to please. Alas! coquettes are too rare. 'Tis a career that requires great abilities, infinite pains, a gay and airy spirit. . . . A charming character at all times; in a country-house an invaluable one.

"Well, I always have had a prejudice against Pontius Pilate," said Lord Cadurcis.

Nothing is more undignified than to make a speech. . . . Every charlatan is an orator, and almost every orator is a charlatan.

I declare when I was eating that truffle, I felt a glow about my heart that, if it were not indigestion, I think must have been gratitude.

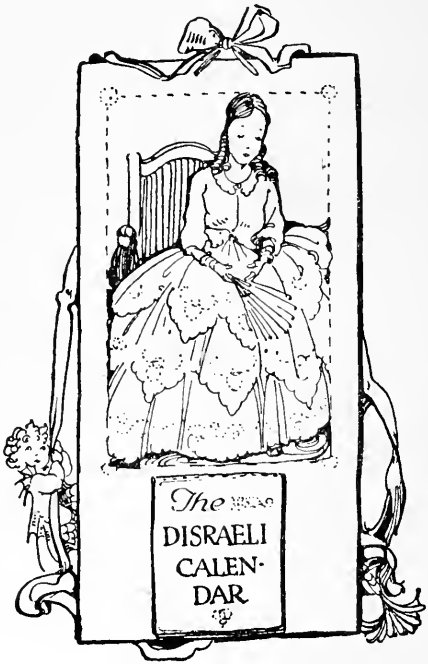
What do these accents recall? or, rather, what did they anticipate? Is there anything closer in English to the manner of Oscar Wilde?

It is not merely that there is a resemblance between the expression of the two men, between the shapes of those brief and antithetical epigrams, those sentences with smirking parenthesis or surprising ends. Their very material is largely the same. The Dizzy calendar is as full of puns as the Oscar Wilde calendar: each found his principal materials in the world of the diner-out, and each exploited to the full the possibilities of the obvious and unusual truth, and of the obvious and unusual falsehood. At their best no two epigrammatists more closely resemble each other: and though the comparison should not be pressed too far, the similitude does not fade away when one gets beyond the mot. In Disraeli sentence often flows into sentence in what we have become accustomed to think the typical

Wildean way. "The world admired him, and called him Charley, from which it will be inferred that he was a privileged person, and was applauded for a thousand actions, which in any one else would have met with decided reprobation." It is the familiar manner: and part of the effect of the sentence springs from the fact that, somehow, it is odd to hear a word like "Charley" on the lips of the highly-conscious dandy Disraeli, a sort of oddity of which Wilde was well aware and which he often exploited. But one can quote other passages in which the material used was material never used by any one but Disraeli before Wilde, though Wilde made it fashionable in the 'nineties. Take this: "I have a passion for living in the air," said Herbert; "I always envied the shepherds in *Don Quixote*. One of my youthful dreams was living among mountains of rosemary, and drinking only goats' milk. After breakfast I will read you Don Quixote's description of the golden age. I have often read it until the tears came into my eyes": it is simply one of Wilde's Cyrils or Eustaces speaking; we can hardly believe it. Or take the mock-serious, hypersensitive æstheticism of this: "Mr. Phœbus one morning opened a chest in his cabin and produced several velvet bags, one full of pearls, another rubies, another Venetian sequins, Napoleons and golden piastres. 'I like to look at them,' said Mr. Phœbus, 'and find life more intense when they are about my person. But bank notes, so cold and thin, they give me an ague.'"

I hasten to add that there is a point at which the resemblance ceases. Dizzy had great powers as a novelist: such things as the descriptions of "low life" in *Sybil* were beyond Wilde's range, though not beyond his appreciation, and he would be an audacious critic who should maintain that Wilde, born under a luckier star, might have become Prime Minister and an idol of the Conservative Party. And,

at the close, I remember that he was anticipated at least once elsewhere, in the works of the almost universal Dickens. People often discuss whether Mr. Harold Skimpole's character resembled Leigh Hunt's; they have not, I think, noticed that his conversation was exceedingly like Wilde's. Turn to his conversations, and especially to that in which he drew the attention of the bailiffs to the beauties of Nature, and you will see what I mean.



AN EDIFYING CLASSIC

I HAVE—if I may be permitted so personal a confession, on account of its relevance—a number of small sons. Like other fathers I have to get them books. It goes to the heart of a professional reviewer to buy any book whatever: one feels about such purchases as a dramatic critic must feel when circumstances compel him to fork out ten and sixpence (plus tax) for a stall. But I do not receive children's books from editors, and their authors, whom I do not commonly know, never send me presentation copies of them. Every Christmas, therefore, and on various natal days sprinkled over the year, I sally out to explore the bookshops for all the world as though I were an ordinary member of the purchasing public. I am seldom entirely pleased with the books I buy. I will not say that my children are not, for their tastes seem to be remarkably indiscriminate. But I have fancied (and how can it be otherwise where children have such obviously exceptional natural gifts) that on the whole the better kinds of books have pleased them best: that *The Jungle Book* and *Alice in Wonderland* have been a more permanent delight to them than *Toddles at the Seaside* and *Florrie's Baa-Lamb*. I, therefore, went out this Christmas determined not to buy any of the ephemeral modern rubbish which is written for children by half-wits who succeed in getting other half-wits to collaborate with illustrations, but to add to the number of those standard works which never lose their attraction. I will, I said, get a children's classic.

What shall it be, I wondered? There is *Æsop:*

they have it. There are Grimm and Andersen, but they have those. The expurgated *Gulliver's Travels* is not unknown to them; they know all about Robin Hood, King Arthur, and Crusoe; they at present dislike the *Arabian Nights*, and I'm hanged if I'm going to give them *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. As I walked to the station my thoughts travelled back to a distant, vivid, but almost unreal past, in which I saw a small boy curled up in an arm-chair reading. What was it he read with most zest? It came to me in a flash. I hadn't heard the book mentioned for years. It was *The Swiss Family Robinson*. Why, of course, that of all books was the book; I would get it. And I would read it again myself. I would recover the old excitement over that battle with the snake; I would refresh my memory as to the habits of the armadillo and the duck-billed platypus; and, above all, I should see that picture of the house in the tree which was the basis of the earliest of my ambitions, and (alas!) the least likely to be fulfilled, unlikely though all the others may be. At the end of a day, however, I had learned that it is one thing to want to buy *The Swiss Family Robinson* and another to get it. I went to shop after shop, and the booksellers looked at me as though I were asking them for a plesiosaurus or a mastodon. They had no copies of it; they held out little hope of obtaining a copy. I tried the second-hand booksellers. Their tune was quite different. They often had copies, but these were always snapped up at once. In the end I persuaded a sceptical bookseller that the book must be obtainable, and that it was his duty as an honourable tradesman to obtain it for me instead of trying to induce me to buy the latest specimen of Mr. Arthur Rackham's beautiful art. Now, a fortnight after Christmas, it has arrived. I have been reading it.

There is no picture of the house in the tree. But the rest is all there: the incredibly simple style, the

pious family, the industry, the remarkable congeries of animals, the woodcuts, the harpooned walrus the "trusty double-barrels," the thousand exciting encounters, and above all the episode of the enormous boa-constrictor:

> Fritz remained by me while I examined the object through my spy-glass.
>
> "It is, as I feared, an enormous serpent!" cried I, "it advances directly this way, and we shall be placed in the greatest possible danger, for it will cross the bridge to a certainty."
>
> "May we not attack it, father?" exclaimed the brave boy.
>
> "Only with the greatest caution," returned I, "it is far too formidable, and too tenacious of life, for us rashly to attempt its destruction. . . ."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Only see," I replied, "how the monster deals with his victim [the donkey]; closer and more tightly he curls his crushing folds, the bones give way, he is kneading him into a shapeless mass. He will soon begin to gorge his prey, and slowly but surely it will disappear down that distended maw!" . . . I expected that the boa, before swallowing its prey, would cover it with saliva, to aid in the operation, although it struck me that its very slender forked tongue was about the worst possible implement for such a purpose.
>
> It was evident to us, however, that this popular idea was erroneous.
>
> The act of lubricating the mass must have taken place during the process of swallowing: certainly nothing was applied beforehand.
>
> This wonderful performance lasted from seven in the morning until noon.

Was there ever anything like it?

It is a superb book. It is easy to make fun of it. Everybody when he remembers it remembers it with a smile; but it is usually a smile of affection. The style, as I have remarked, is the greatest example of naive pomposity which we possess. The improbabilities (over and above the great obvious improbability of every kind of bird and beast in the Zoo being concentrated on a single island) follow each other without a break, and no edifying story-teller on record ever pumped out his edification with so little attempt at concealment. Here is no education in parenthesis and no moralising by implication: the morals are expounded in sermons, and the facts, mainly zoological, are handed out in large wads, accompanied by frankly informative illustrations. By all the rules of story-telling, as expounded by critics and observed by conscious artists, this book was bound to fail; the most innocent child must inevitably be bored by it. But the point is that it didn't fail. I do not think that I was more addicted to sermons than any other child or less fond of being educated; but I do clearly remember that I was thrilled by this story, and that the irrelevant details here never struck me as irrelevant. It seemed the most natural thing in the world for the author, when mentioning an ant-eater, to digress in order to tell all about ant-eaters; and I happened to be interested in ant-eaters. With the exception of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (which is on a much higher literary plane), I do not remember any book in which so large a didactic element is so successfully conveyed in a story. And the author managed it because he was a man of extraordinary simplicity, sweetness, goodness, and curiosity, a man with much of the child in him, who went straight ahead as he felt inclined, and never thought at all of himself or of art. The author, I say. But who was he? This *is* a classic beyond all dispute. On the title page of this book appear no

names but those of the editor (the late W. H. G. Kingston) and a horde of ancient and modern illustrators, of whom the ancient are the better. Either the editor did not know the author's name, or else he simply forgot all about him, automatically regarding the book (but few of the greatest books are looked at in this way) as something impersonal and established, like Stonehenge or a phenomenon of Nature. Wasn't he a pastor? Wasn't his name, *mustn't* it have been, Muller or Schmidt? I don't know. I am away from home. The only work of reference within my reach is Colonel John Buchan's *History of the War*, and I have searched the index of that in vain.

CRITICS IN 1820

THE centenary of Keats's *Lamia* has just—well, I won't say been celebrated, but occurred; and the few people who have commented on the fact have dutifully reminded themselves how wrong their predecessors were about Keats. He was told to go back to his galley pots: the Muse could have no relations with a Cockney apothecary. Reading these remarks, and others about the general gullibility of critics and their common failure to recognise genius, sent me back to those old reviews.

Certainly they contain a great many deplorable misjudgments: so many that one finds some comfort in Leslie Stephen's observation that "criticism is an even more perishable commodity than poetry." Keats, except from his personal friend, Leigh Hunt, scarcely got a word of printed commendation until just before his death; and the sales of those volumes which the gallant Taylor and Hessey published were grotesquely small. Generally speaking, he was treated as a contemptible satellite of the fractious Cockney Radical, Leigh Hunt. *Blackwood*, in an article on the Cockney school, perpetrated an extremely sweeping sentence, when, after dressing down Leigh Hunt, it menaced his "minor adherents . . . the Shelleys, the Keatses, and the Webbes," not the least remarkable feature of which sentence is the bracketing of Mr. Webbe, whose very name is now known to few, with two of the greatest of English poets. The *Quarterly* on *Endymion* was almost as sweeping. It began its review with:

> Reviewers have been sometimes accused of not

> reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work.

They had made efforts, but no power on earth could carry them through; they even questioned whether the author could be really called Keats, "for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody." After several pages of trouncing we come to "But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte."

Coleridge and Wordsworth received their worst treatment from the *Monthly Review*, the remarkable organ which years before had said that *The Vicar of Wakefield* had "defects enough to put the reader out of all patience with an author capable of so strangely under-writing himself." It reviewed *Lyrical Ballads* (which only had one review in its first three months) as a mere series of imitations of the ancients, with the comment, "None but savages have submitted to eat acorns after corn was found." The *Ancient Mariner* was described as "the strangest story of a cock and bull that we ever saw on paper." *Tintern Abbey* was admitted to be "poetical, beautiful, and philosophical," but "somewhat tinctured with gloomy, narrow and unsociable ideas of seclusion from the commerce of the world; as if men were born to live in woods and wilds, unconnected with each other!" "Genius and originality" were discovered in the publication, but—

> We wish to see another from the same hand, written on more elevated subjects and in a more cheerful disposition.

No such reservation was made by the *Monthly* about *Christabel*. The rhythms were not to be tolerated:

> We have long since condemned in Mr. Scott and in Miss Holford and in fifty other males and females, the practice of arbitrary pronunciation assumed as a principle for regulating the length or rhythm of a verse. . . . This precious production is not finished, but we are to have more and more of it in future ! "

Were it not that good writing had died out, "it would be truly astonishing that such rude, unfashioned stuff should be tolerated." "The poem itself," was the conclusion, "is below criticism." Of *The Excursion* we know Jeffrey said, "This will never do," and Brougham's review of Byron's first book is a classic:

> The poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. . . . His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water.

There certainly was weak verse in the book, but there was much that was precociously clever, and Brougham was absurd when he said, remarking that everybody wrote poetry when young, that "it happens in the life of nine men out of ten who are educated in England; and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron."

"Whatever judgment," concluded the *Edinburgh*, "may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content, for they are the last we shall ever have from him." Within ten years the *Edinburgh* had to eat its words pretty thoroughly. It was barely ten years afterwards that the great notice of *Childe Harold* came out in which Byron was bracketed with Rousseau as having "extraordinary power over the minds of

men," and was told that "his being has in it all the elements of the highest poetry." And to do reviewers justice, not all of them took so long to wake up about everybody. *Blackwood* may have reprobated Shelley, but it called *The Revolt of Islam* the work of a genius, and contrasted Shelley with his contemporaries: "Hunt and Keats, and some others of the School, are indeed men of considerable cleverness, but as poets, they are worthy of sheer and instant contempt."

> Mr. Shelley, whatever his errors may have been, is a scholar, a gentleman, and a poet; and he must, therefore, despise from his soul the only eulogies to which he has hitherto been accustomed—paragraphs in the *Examiner* and sonnets from Johnny Keats.

Burns obtained recognition from the *Monthly* in the very year of his Kilmarnock volume; Jane Austen's *Emma* received an elaborate eulogy in the *Quarterly* on publication; and Alfred Tennyson at twenty-one was the subject of a full-length article in the *Westminster Review*. It was by John Stuart Mill, and began in a characteristically Utilitarian manner:

> The machinery of a poem is not less susceptible of improvement than the machinery of a cotton-mill; nor is there any better reason why the one should not retrograde from the days of Milton, than the other from those of Arkwright.

Tennyson's merits were fully exposed, and he was urged (he unhappily acted on the advice) to turn himself into a didactic and statesmanlike poet.

Let us not be too gloomy about the reviewers. They are at their worst in an age of technical and intellectual transition, when change revolts them. Even when we are talking of the Revolutionary epoch we must remember that most of the poets

encouraged each other; that Charles Lamb was early in his perception of the greatness of Wordsworth and Coleridge; and that, after all, there *was* Leigh Hunt. He was also a critic, as much as Brougham and Jeffrey, and his soundness deserves as much notice as their fallibility. He scarcely made a mistake; there was no poetic genius of his age who he did not detect almost instantly. He had something of the poet in him; and the poets, though they sometimes made mistakes, are as a rule early to discover and sedulous to encourage contemporaries of genius. That any man who, because of his poetical knowledge or editorial sagacity or for some other extraneous reason, happens to have a new book to review should be expected to judge it correctly is too much to expect. Jeffrey and Brougham were men of great powers, but why on earth should we imagine that they would be anything but mistaken about Byron or Keats or Shelley when these, in their immaturity, first appeared? They are very inadequate basis for the despairing deduction that all critics in all ages must inevitably be wrong, or can only be right by chance.

STOCK PHRASES

MR. A. M. HYAMSON is known to amateurs of lexicography as the compiler of an extremely useful small *Dictionary of Universal Biography*. His latest work, *A Dictionary of English Phrases*, should be equally useful. Much of the information he gives will be found in existing dictionaries of quotations and of *Phrase and Fable*, but he has worked on a rather eclectic plan of his own with a view to providing a complement to the ordinary verbal dictionary. He himself says that he has included, besides "phrases proper," "phraseological and historical allusions," "catchwords" (political and other), "stereotyped modes of speech," "metaphorical clichés," "corrupted words," "nick-names and sobriquets," "derivations from personal names," "quotations that have become part of the language," "war words," etc. It is a curious company; but I think that experience will prove that Mr. Hyamson's method justifies itself.

A large part of any such work must be devoted to telling the instructed reader what he knows already. You cannot compile dictionaries with a single eye on those who least need them. Many of us may not need to be told the meaning and origin of Gordian Knot, Rump Parliament, Gradgrind, Procrustean Bed, or the Seven Ages of Man. A very large number of the purchasers of this book will probably never have need to refer to

Goth, A: a barbarian; one heedless of the claims of the arts and sciences. After the people

that overran and devastated the Roman Empire in the third and fifth centuries.

Yet he would be a very learned man who should find any page on which there was no information which was novel to him; and I myself, having only a limited space at my disposal, can only give a few specimens to indicate the sort of material which Mr. Hyamson supplies.

Oddly, the very first phrase which caught my eye when I opened the book was one which comes from a source that I had not dreamed of suspecting. "Not worth a twopenny damn" is the phrase; it looks too simple to invite curiosity; but according to our present authority it derives from the fact that there was "an Indian coin, a dam, which much depreciated in value." Opposite it I noticed "uncle" as used of a pawnbroker. It comes, apparently, from the Latin *uncus*, a hook on which pledges used to be hung. There is no mistaking the meaning of "The Great Unwashed," which appears just below "Uncle," but a very small fraction of those who employ this offensive designation will know that it was first used by Edmund Burke. "Go to Bath" is said to be in allusion to the popularity of Bath as a place for the treatment of lunatics; but "Go to Jericho" is disputed. Some will derive it from the fact that Henry VIII. used a country place called Jericho as a retreat; others from King David's order to certain people to go to Jericho until their beards were grown. King David: "as drunk as David's sow." Looking that up I find it amidst "drunk as a cobbler," "drunk as a fiddler," "drunk as a lord," "drunk as a pope," "drunk as the devil," and "drunk as a tinker at Banbury." It is alleged that there was a man David Lloyd, of Hereford, whose wife was found drunk in a pig-stye when he took a party to see a sow he owned. It isn't very

convincing, but nothing better offers. "To let the cat out of the bag" is attributed to a custom of selling cats in bags, falsely representing the same to be sucking-pigs.

The "Ashes" (cricketing) have been satisfactorily run down to the *Sporting Times* of 1882. Of "chaff," meaning banter, three explanations are offered, one of which is that there was

> a custom in the North Midlands of emptying a sack of chaff at the door of a man who ill-treats his wife, to indicate that thrashing is done there.

"Chestnut" (an old joke) is variously attributed; I am surprised to find it so modern that it can plausibly be traced to a story of a chestnut farm too frequently told by E. A. Abbey, the painter, who died as recently as 1911. "To face the music" has no fewer than four suggested derivations:

> From (1) the actor, who in facing the music faces his public, his critics; (2) the difficulty in training army horses to remain quiet in the company of a regimental band; (3) the drumming out of men dismissed by the U.S. army; (4) the muster of militia-men who are drawn up in ranks facing the band.

You take your choice; but with such uncertainty one feels that the genuine original context may have been none of these. The mention of the actor facing his public sends me in search of another phrase. It is here, but only in the form of "To get the big bird"; Mr. Hyamson should note "to get the bird" as the commoner variant. Amongst terms which are less commonly used than they might be, I notice "Albino Poets," which was used by Wendell Holmes of the sicklier kind of bards.

It is inconceivable that such a collection should be complete, or that a collection in one volume should not frequently disappoint the reader. Granted that it contains any considerable amount of information which is new to one and not easily accessible elsewhere, one ought to be grateful for it. I certainly, to use a phrase which, as I now learn, derives from Heywood's *Proverbes* (1546), will not look the gift-horse in the mouth. Mr. Hyamson himself, in fact, disarms criticism in his very modest preface. He does not profess to be able exactly to define the scope of his book; he seems to have been guided as much by intuition as by reason. He says that critics who point out deficiencies will seldom lack justification, and he asks for suggestions for additional entries. For myself, I think that it would be worth his while to pay rather more attention to slang, and especially to well-established American slang, which is in continual process of naturalisation here. He has plenty of mid-Victorian words and phrases which came from America: "carpet-bagger," "bunkum," "bark up the wrong tree," and hundreds of others. But if he went freely about London with his ears pricked up (Virgil's *Æneid* I and Chapman's *All Foole's Day*), he would certainly encounter many more recent immigrants. We may never adopt the admirable word "copperthroat," for we are already so well-stocked with terms descriptive of drinking propensities. Possibly "rubber-neck," also, may fail to get a home here. But "beat it" is coming, "beat the band" is already popular, and "to go on the water-wagon" (briefly, on the wagon) may be heard almost anywhere. Mr. Hyamson would find it easy to make room for many additions if he could bring himself—though the process must be distressing to any dictionary-maker—to leave out some of the phrases he has now thought fit to include. Some of the solemner nicknames might go. It is quite right

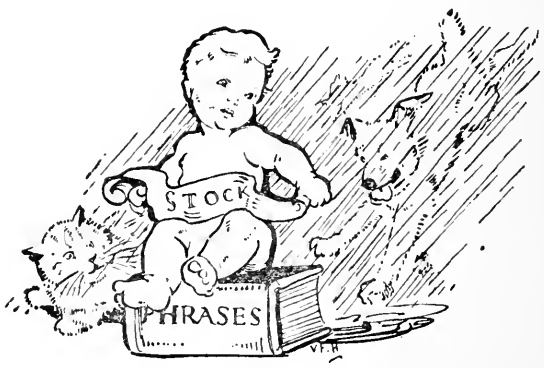
that we should be told that "The British Solomon" was James I.; the phrase has long been widely current, and is often used without explanation in the context. But it is hardly worth while to record the fact that a forgotten painter was at one time known as "the English Salvator Rosa." There are other words—"uppertendom" is an instance—which are merely awkward attempts at coinage which have definitely failed. And the words made from proper names might be diminished. I see "Beardsleyism" here, defined as:

> A pictorial illustration in black-and-white in the style of Aubrey Vincent Beardsley.

The word has doubtless been used, but it is unlikely to be used if or when Beardsley has been forgotten. Anybody can make that sort of word at any moment; it defines itself. We are quite likely to see Lloyd-Georgism, Carsonism, Byronism, Conradism, Wilsonism, and many other such in the papers to-morrow morning.

These are small suggestions. I turn from the book with a certain melancholy. Why? Because of the number of fine phrases it contains which we use daily and the fineness of which we never realise. It is a cemetery of dead metaphors; these were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they are put into dictionaries. Surely the reflection is a little saddening. A man may make an image which is of local application or a little above the heads of mankind, and it will retain its freshness in perpetuity. Let him do the best thing of all—make an image which is widely applicable and plain to the common understanding—and his beautiful creation will be killed by too much handling. What an agreeable shock of surprise must have been felt by those who were first told by an imaginative man that they were looking for a needle

in a bundle of hay! With us familiarity has bred blindness; we drop the phrase out without seeing any needle or any hay. "To build on the sand," "to beat the air," "to sponge," "to split hairs," "to feather one's nest"—there are a thousand of them in this book. They have become so worn by usage that we might almost as well be without them; they are said to "enrich the language," but the only person who really gets full enjoyment out of this opulence is a foreigner who learns English. Every great writer contributes to the stock; his very best phrases are withdrawn from him and turned into half-obliterated currency. And for us there comes ready to our tongue a stock description of every situation and a stock comparison for every quality. "Straight—as a die," "Old—as the hills," "Soft—as a peach," "Raining—like cats and dogs," "Dark—as pitch"; half the epithets we have bring their little withered tails behind them with scarcely a wag left in them. *A Dictionary of English Phrases* is an immense mausoleum full of the mummies of Samsons, and Helens, and Cleopatras.



THE LAUREATES

Mr. E. K. Broadus's scholarly and amusing book, *The Poets Laureate in England*, contains a study of the origins of the laureateship, a history of its development as a regular institution, sketches of the lives of the Laureates, and accounts of their work, whether commanded or spontaneous, as political poets, in the broad sense of the word.

Before scientific history began, respectable authors thought nothing of making the confident assertion that the University of Cambridge was founded by Cantaber of Spain, 4321 years after the Creation, or by King Arthur; that the University of Oxford owed its origin to King Alfred; and that the prime founder of the British Kingdom was a refugee from Troy. To a generation unfamiliar with documents, impatient of exact research, and fond (as all healthy people are) of the picturesque, there was nothing unnatural in the neat pedigrees of the Laureateship produced by the antiquaries of the seventeenth century. In Dryden's patent, "Sir Geoffrey Chaucer, Knight," "Sir John Gower, Knight," and "Benjamin Jonson, Esquire," were all specifically mentioned as having fully and amply enjoyed "the rights, privileges, benefits, and advantages thereunto belonging" in the time of "our Royall Progenitors." Where supposed experts were so dogmatic, it was not strange that laymen should take the unique lineage of the Laureateship on trust. These poets and others had received pensions and liquor from the Crown, and some of them were called poets laureate. But the pensions—notably Chaucer's—had not always any obvious connection with their poetry; the title was a

mere degree given by the Universities; and there was no question of a regular Post in the Household to which these men were appointed. Their positions varied. Spenser received money from Elizabeth, but his contact with her was of the slenderest. Ben Jonson was pensioned over a long period of years by two monarchs and supplied many Court Masques in return for the favour. It was not until the nomination of Dryden that the Laureateship was recognised as a definite salaried office which ought to be filled. Nevertheless, I feel that Professor Broadus is a little rigid in his insistence on the fact. Most of our institutions have shadowy beginnings, and the development of the Laureateship may be regarded as analogous to that of the Peerage, Parliament, and the Power of the Purse. And at least I think we ought to shift the birth of the regular office back to Davenant; Davenant may not have had a patent, but the fact that when he died Dryden was in terms mentioned as his successor shows that he was already considered to be holding an office, even if his status was only posthumously recognised on paper.

After the date of Dryden's appointment, Professor Broadus distinguishes three clearly marked epochs. Until the Georges came, the Laureates, though any political writing they might do was appreciated, were not expected to compose particular poems on particular dates. Dryden may have been moved to write four great poems by virtue of his official position, but he was not asked for New Year Odes, and Tate, though prolific in these compositions, committed them voluntarily. It was with the appointment of Nicholas Rowe, in 1715, that the stated duties began. Until George III.'s time, the Laureate was compelled to furnish annually a New Year's Ode and a Birthday Ode, to be sung before the King by royal musicians in the Chapel Royal. Pope maliciously referred to Cibber's Odes as being

made by the poet Laureate for the time being, to be sung at Court on every New Year's Day, the words of which are happily drowned by the instruments.

Whitehead, himself Laureate, wrote a very frank *Pathetic Apology for all Laureates*, in which he said:

> His Muse, obliged by sack and pension
> Without a subject or invention,
> Must certain words in order set
> As innocent as a Gazette . . . .
> Content with Boyce's harmony,
> Who throws on many a worthless lay
> His music and his powers away.

He, a patient and a sensible man, sometimes managed to combine a humane and eloquent passage in an official poem, but more often produced verses which deserved his own candid description; the only men who were probably comfortable with the job were the obscure Eusden and the worthless Pye. A typical passage is Colley Cibber's panegyric on the offspring of George II.:

> Around the royal table spread,
> See how the beauteous branches shine!
> Sprung from the fertile genial bed
> Of glorious GEORGE and CAROLINE.

The task was usually unpalatable; one offer made in the middle of the century was coupled with an assurance that Odes would not be insisted upon. But the offer was declined, and the obligation continued until George IV. released Southey, who had insisted when he was "inducted into all the rights, privileges and benefits which Henry James Pye, Esq., did enjoy," that he wished that "upon great

public events I might either write or be silent as the spirit moved," and had only under protest supplied (not for publication) Odes for a few birthdays of the old mad blind George III.

Then began the third period. Since then the Laureate has been free "to write or be silent." Mr. Broadus rightly says that Tennyson was a national spokesman as no previous Laureate has been, and he calls attention to the fact, too often ignored, that during the late war the present Laureate produced a series of poems "of memorable quality and substantial length." "It is not," he says, "the ephemeral impulses of the war which find expression in Mr. Bridges' pages, but rather the greater emotions—the emotions which will still emerge as the perspective lengthens, and will sum up all the rest." "Throughout the war, and since the war was won, Mr. Bridges has performed a service to which this history affords no parallel."

Is the Laureateship worth having? Professor Broadus's book gives emphatic support to the view that "command" poems are, as a rule, likely to be bad. Even the ablest and most patriotic of genuine poets will probably produce a frigid and hollow-sounding composition if he be ordered to celebrate a nation, a hero, or a cause on a particular date. But this is not, as it has so often been supposed to be, sufficient ground for a condemnation of the Laureateship as an institution. Those who make it so are cherishing a misconception of the historical facts. It was always supposed that an official Laureate would occasionally derive inspiration from national history and political events; and there is sense in the assumption that a man publicly called to the position of national poet will find his thoughts turning more often than they might, in other circumstances, turn to those themes, and might more often be moved to genuine poetical utterance concerning

them. The disciplined Poet Laureate, the bard working to a schedule, is another matter; and he has never existed in this country except during the one Hanoverian century. He appeared and disappeared with the powdered wig, and it is inconceivable that he should come again. A Laureateship without set duties is not, as is so generally assumed an obsolete survival; it is precisely the Laureateship, which was originally established. One common error is evident here; another lies in the equally frequent statement that appointments to the Laureateship have nearly always been bad.

They have not. Excepting in the eighteenth century they have usually been very good. We may, with Professor Broadus, rule out Chaucer, Skelton, and Jonson as not being in the true Laureate sequence: but the rest are a very creditable list. When Dryden was appointed there was one greater poet living, but even the most tolerant of restored Stuarts could scarcely have been expected to select John Milton, whose head, in 1660, had narrowly escaped being stuck upon Temple Bar to rot with those of the regicides. In 1688 there was nothing better available than Shadwell, who received the appointment, and whose work, after all, still in a manner lives. Nahum Tate, who followed shortly after, was certainly not a very eminent man, though he contributed one classic to the language, the carol, "While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night." But, in the political circumstances, nothing better could have been done. The Georgian era undeniably saw a slump both in poetry and in Laureates. Yet it is worth remarking that even in the worst age of official taste the Laureateship was offered to the greatest poet of that age. Gray refused. That he should wear the mantle just relinquished by Cibber was a little too much to ask; and he was a recluse. His own account of his refusal was characteristic:

> Though I very well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver, yet if any great man would say to me, "I make you rat-catcher to His Majesty, with a salary of £300 a year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand upon these things," I cannot say I should jump at it; nay, if they would drop the very name of the office and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me; but I do not pretend to blame anyone else that has not the same sensations; for my part I would rather be sergeant-trumpeter or pinmaker to the palace. Nevertheless, I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit.

Whitehead, who received the reversion, was hardly great enough to "retrieve the credit of the thing," but there was no one much better in a time when graceful small poets were common and great poets not to be found. Warton, his successor, was also a good—and an unexpected—choice, considering the material available. When Pye died, in 1813, Sir Walter Scott was offered the Laureateship and declined it; Southey, not a mean figure, however poorly he may compare in our eyes with two poets then writing, accepted it, and began the restoration of credit. In the last eighty years there have been four Laureates, of whom one was a statesman's practical joke, and the other three were Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Robert Bridges. No doubt many good nineteenth-century poets did not hold the Laureateship. You cannot kill a Laureate a year in order to prove your ability to choose his successor;

if Tennyson was Poet Laureate, Browning and Matthew Arnold could never be Poets Laureate, since the office is held for life. This point is often overlooked; the truth is that as a rule the appointments have been made very well.

So why not go on making them? It would be pointless to exaggerate the advantages of the thing. Let us say no more than that any contact between the State and good literature is to be welcomed, and that the Laureateship has led to the enrichment of our literature by a few good poems. Yet we need not even go so far as that to justify a continuance of the office. If no more could be said for it than that it will generally, or even occasionally, give an advertisement to a meritorious poet, and that it is an ancient and innocuous part of our national system, it would be worth preserving. So many old things compel their own abolition by becoming positive obstructions, abuses, and nuisances, that we should feel especially tender about the old things that do no harm.

Let the Laureateship remain; and let the butt of sack be restored. The student of Professor Broadus's book will find that from the earliest days all our Court poets and Poets Laureate were paid partly in wine. He will also find, and he ought not to be surprised to find, that when the grant of a butt of wine was commuted for a small additional grant of money, the change was made at the request of the egregious Pye, at once the most avaricious, the most abstemious, and the most illiterate of all those who have worn the British laurel. In so doing he cheated all his successors. For a thrifty government conveniently forgot to pay them the £26 in lieu of wine, pretending that the sum was included in the £100 which had always been paid, and which continued to be paid. As Southey wrote pathetically to Walter Scott:

> The butt of sack is now wickedly commuted to £26; which said sum, unlike the canary, is subject to income-tax, land-tax, and heaven knows what beside. The whole net income is little more or less than £90.

Scott replied:

> Is there no getting rid of that iniquitous *modus*, and requiring the butt in kind? I would have you think of it; I know no man so well entitled to Xeres sack as yourself, though many bards would make a better figure at drinking it. I should think that in due time a memorial might get some relief in this part of the appointment—it should be at least £100 wet and £100 dry. When you have carried your point of discarding the ode, and my point of getting the sack, you will be exactly in the position of Davy in the farce, who stipulates for more wages, less work, and the key of the ale-cellar.

Mr. Bridges at present receives £72 from the Lord Chamberlain's department and £27 from the Lord Steward's "in lieu of a butt of sack." In other words, Pye's greed simply resulted in a reduction of salary. Mr. Bridges is not primarily a bacchanalian poet, but I cannot think that he would object if some Member of Parliament, with a soul above trickery, the statute of Limitations, and the Gaming Act, should begin agitating for the undoing of an ancient wrong, and the restoration of a still more ancient perquisite.

THE PROSPECTS OF ENGLISH

"THERE is," says Professor Matthews, at the opening of his *Essays on English*, "no topic about which men dispute more frequently, more bitterly, or more ignorantly, than about the right and the wrong use of words. . . . To misuse words, to make grammatical blunders, is an evidence of illiteracy; and to accuse a man of illiteracy is to disparage the social standing of his father and his mother." He manages to avoid acerbity himself, and I hope that I shall keep my own black passions in control while writing this review.

It is a slight book, a series of papers, which not only avoid pedantry, but do not aim at any display of scholarship. The book is readable and uniformly sensible—a book intended for the non-specialist, which presents him with no difficulties. It is not a treatise, but a volume of good and useful journalism. Professor Matthews was apparently incited by finding that many of his colleagues in the American Academy were alarmed at the prospects of our tongue. They thought that degeneration had already begun, degeneration like that which marked the later history of Greek. This, they maintained, is our Hellenistic era. Professor Matthews, instinctively revolting against so dreary a view, set about an examination of the situation, and has now formulated his own opinion.

I assume that all, or almost all, of the readers of these lines will desire two things: that the English of England and America should retain both its vigour and its homogenity, and that, if possible, its use should spread amongst the peoples of the world. Professor Brander Matthews, who speaks English

himself, has inherited our modes of thought and feeling, and consequently desires the perpetuation and extension of Anglo-American civilisation, treats both these aspects of his subject. With regard to the latter, there is not much said and there is little to say. Political events in the end will probably determine the status of our language in the world. If we and the Americans retain the power we have we may look forward to a steady increase in the number of people to whom our tongue is a birthright, and we may reasonably hope that it (with French as its nearest competitor) will become the *lingua franca* of the world, with consequent results in the laws, manners, and morals of the world—for, honestly, the Germans are not the only people who have desired to disseminate their Kultur, though they made the ghastly mistake of thinking it possible to spread it by mere boasting and force of arms. Professor Matthews dismisses Volapuk (which is dead anyhow) and Esperanto; has a kind word for Ido, and a kinder for Latin; and concludes that French will ultimately share with English the privilege of being, amongst educated men, universal. Beyond that he does not go; and, after all, prophesy here has gone far enough. As to the future of English (domestically), he is optimistic. I think that had he known more of current English he would have been more optimistic still.

The English language is in the charge of two great aggregations of states: the British Empire and the American Union. It runs, or it may conceivably not run, two risks. On the one hand, it may be muddied by too great an influx of new terms, flooding in from every quarter of the English-speaking globe; on the other hand it may be the victim of fissiparous tendencies such as produced the divergence between Spanish and Portuguese. The first danger, Professor Matthews believes, is found on examination not to be serious. We are not taking words faster than our

fathers did; many are called but few are chosen; colloquialisms change, but standard English remains, and it develops slowly. Its risks are rather of the other kind. There has been observable too rigid a reluctance to admit desirable terms from the popular speech, a slightly exaggerated inclination to Latinity. And, as Mr. Bridges has vigorously argued, our difficulty in regard to foreign importations is that we do not naturalise them as freely as our ancestors did; we still write "ennui" and "nuance," and write them in italics. The words we get from the populace, at home and abroad, seldom stay unless they are really good and valuable. There is apparently little fear that English, as we speak it here, will merely run to seed so long as we do not. But is the unity of the English language threatened? Is there any tendency on the part of English speech and American speech to diverge?

The answer, I believe, is so obvious that it would not be worth making were it not that there are people in both countries who casually assume such a process to be inevitable. There are local differences, both of pronunciation and of vocabulary. But the popular speech of Illinois is no farther apart from that of Devonshire than that of Devonshire is from that of Whitechapel, and an educated American talks more like an educated Englishman than does an educated Scot who has remained at home. This is the fact; since it is so after generations during which communications between the two continents were not so easy and frequent as they are now, and popular education was less widespread and uniform, there is ground for Professor Matthew's argument that, if anything, the future tendency of the two divisions of one speech will be to come closer. In these days even slang, provided it be really vivid slang, crosses the Atlantic very rapidly, and an American neologism which really meets a demand for a new

word spreads to England instead of remaining a local, differentiating Americanism. "The self-governing dominions of the British Commonwealth," says Professor Matthews, "and the semi-independent states of the American Union are all of them proving-ground for verbal seedlings which may in time be transplanted and acclimated (we should say acclimatised) in standard English." Our acquisitions from America are varied. Amongst the earliest were Indian words such as "wigwam" and "totem." Many of the later ones have been double words, mostly metaphorical. Amongst them are "scare-head," "wind-jammer," "side-track," "side-step," "pussy-foot," "high-brow," "joy-ride," "spell-binder," "sky-scraper," "strap-hanger" (there never was a word we more acutely needed than that one), "rough-rider" "sky-pilot," "fool-proof," "gun-shy," "sky-light." "Boss" and "boom" are older than most of these. The first came out of New York, and the second from the lumber-camps of Michigan. There was a time when they were regarded here as Americanisms; their origin is hardly realised now by most of those who habitually use them. Simultaneously new English coinages make their way into the United States. "Cad" and "fad" were at first only localisms; they were Briticisms struggling for existence, and getting slowly into sporadic use in England, until at last they achieved a peaceful penetration into the United States. "Rough" has gone to America, "tough" may finally settle here. Some words and locutions do not seem to thrive overseas, but, if purely ephemeral slang be ruled out, they are not very numerous.

They are even less numerous than Professor Matthews thinks. He might have made his case stronger, but, like many Americans who write on the language, he is imperfectly acquainted with British practice; he ought to have asked an Englishman to check his illustrations of divergence. He is perfectly correct in

saying that the American "back of" has never won favour here, and that it probably never will; he notes a "British localism" that may not spread in "directly," for "as soon as." But several words which he thinks we do not use we, as a fact, use daily. He is right—it is the first thing the Englishman is breathlessly told when he lands on the Island of Manhattan—in saying that what is a "tuxedo" in America is known only as a "dinner-jacket" in England. It is also true that a "drummer" is in England a "commercial traveller." But his authorities have misled him when they gave him to suppose that the word "bedspread" is unknown in England. He gives "cowboy" and "cuspidor" as words which have no British equivalent; we use the former to describe an object we do not ourselves produce, and our equivalent for the latter is the robust word, "spittoon." "Fall," for "autumn," though a good old English word, is no longer used in England; but it is astonishing that Professor Matthews should believe that nobody in England uses the word "rooster," for "cock," or "wilt," for "wither." The word "rooster," he says, "has completely faded from memory in England." "There would," he proceeds,

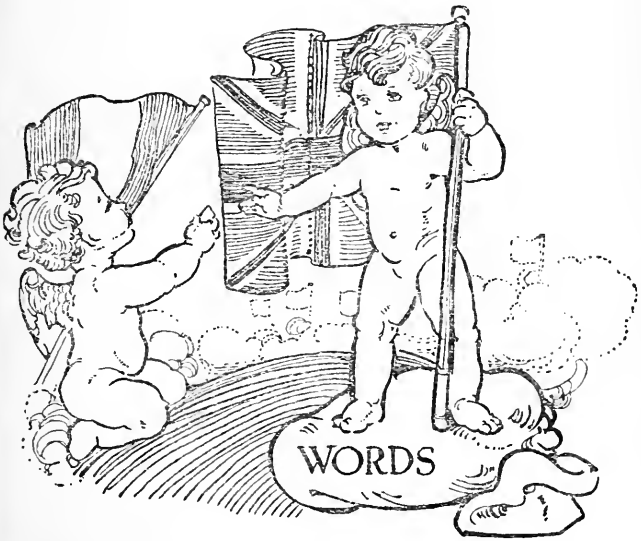
> be advantage in explaining to the American visitor that, if he goes to an English hotel for a dinner at a fixed price, he will be at liberty to call for a second helping of anything which may please his palate if the bill-of-fare declares that "a follow of any dish will be served without extra charge."

But on what bill-of-fare is the word "follow" to be found, used as an equivalent for a second helping? You may find the word in Dickens; it may still be currently employed by the "plump head-waiter at the Cock"; but where else can it be encountered? Professor Matthews may be assured that the con-

ventional English term—unless you happen to prefer "another go," "another whack," or, more quietly, "some more"—is precisely the same as the American. His conclusion stands: "We cannot help seeing that the divergences between British English and American English are relatively very few if only we keep in mind the immense vocabulary of our ever-expanding language."

Many other aspects of language development are touched on by Professor Matthews. He has a good deal to say about the coinage of new words. One is astonished when one reflects how rapidly it is proceeding. The new words swarm; words of all kinds; "dope," "enthuse," "peeved," "addict," "secretariat," "personnel," "opt," "national" (the noun)—they are everywhere, and we may devoutly hope that not all of them will survive, for not all of them are needed. Professor Matthews calls attention to the influence of headline-writers—who must have short words—on the language. He remarks on the degeneration of words: somebody once said that no modern writer would dare to say that "Adam led his blooming Eve out of her blasted Paradise." He has some interesting pages about words which have come back into currency after having been long regarded as archaic, these including such familiar vocables as "anthem," "deluge," "problem," "illusion," "sphere," "phantom," "plumage," and "shapely." He deprecates the use of words in writing which we find it impossible to use in speech, giving "irrefragable" as an example; elsewhere I notice himself using that signal specimen "inexpugnable." And he argues very strongly in favour of the complete naturalisation, phonetically and typographically, of foreign words which we have decided that we cannot do without. There is an unanswerable case in favour of this. It is grotesque to go on writing *rôle* and *mêlée* as we do; our ancestors would have standardised

"shover" and "garridge" by now. An elaboration of that argument may be found in one of the early tracts of the Society of Pure English. The latest tract issued by this deserving Society deals with something less vital, but very interesting. It registers some of the French borrowings from English, demonstrating that our exports are substantial as well as our imports. Until the late seventeenth century the French took virtually nothing from us; but since the Huguenots began translating English books into French the process of absorption has never flagged. The English vocabularies of war, millinery and cookery are almost wholly derived from France; but the French have drawn quite as freely on us for their vocabularies of sport and politics.



RAILROADIANA

I WAS looking over a list of sales to be held in New York by the American Art Association, the Sotheby's of America. All the usual things are to come up: incunabula, illuminated manuscripts, first editions, four Shakespeare folios, etchings by Whistler, eighteenth-century illustrated books. My eye lingered lovingly on some of these categories. I mused on these treasures three thousand miles over the horizon, most of them emigrants from their English homes. But one entry aroused in me not a sentimental hankering, but wonder. A gentleman, or the executor of a gentleman, is disposing of a collection of what, with fine courage, the cataloguer calls "Railroadiana." Why should he not? We have Shakespeariana, Baconiana, and Johnsoniana; nevertheless it looks odd—almost as odd as "aeroplaniana" and "oilenginiana" will look fifty years hence.

I suppose that this hoard of "railroadiana" (we should still call them "Railway Items" or "Books, etc., Bearing on the History of Locomotive Traction" in this country) will probably consist mainly of works illustrating the development of railways from George Stephenson onwards. It is early as yet, and the chances are that the man who made the collection was himself a railwayman or what is called a railway magnate. I don't think that railways have yet got into the field of vision of the collector proper. But they undoubtedly will when they are slightly more venerable and when information about their origins is more patently useless and recondite. To-day it is the railwayman who forms libraries about his industry. When railways have been transformed or, better,

abolished, it will not be the traffic experts who will know about nineteenth-century railways. It will be the bookworms—men who could scarcely drive a perambulator, much less an engine; just as if anybody is collecting information about Alexander's campaigns we may be sure it is not a soldier. Everything, when it gets hoary, falls into the net of this one class of enthusiasts, the dustmen, the rag, bone and bottle men of human history. In our great-grandsons' day there will be bald and spectacled collectors who will know by heart the names of the railway systems of our day, and will spend fortunes upon precious scraps of information about those half-forgotten institutions. And the queer thing will be that they will search with most zeal not for large and authoritative books but for odds and ends that we regard as negligible. Posterity's tastes are always surprising.

To-day men collect, and will give large sums of money for, horn-books: little contraptions from which Queen Anne's children, numerous but early dead, learned their alphabets. Children's books of a later date form the substance of specialised collections; where (as with some of the early compositions of Charles and Mary Lamb) they bear famous names they will fetch their hundreds of pounds, enough money to keep a labourer's family for a year. There are always collectors who go off the beaten tracks of early printing and first editions of the dramatists and prefer to devote themselves to out-of-the-way literature which will illustrate some aspect of social life. The more ordinary and common the literature was in its own time the more likely, as a rule, it is to be scarce; yet it is from this sort of thing that we are likeliest to get a peep into the minds of the generality of our ancestors or a notion of their day-to-day lives. The antiquary of the future who wishes to know what our own time was like will get a very distorted picture if he possesses the works of Mr.

Swinburne and Mr. Conrad and has never heard of *Home Notes* or Mr. Garvice; if Sir Edward Elgar's symphonies survive, but not "Get Out and Get Under" or "Pack up Your Troubles." Yet copies of these will be few and hard to get at. The hawkers a hundred years ago sold chapbooks in the streets; elderly dons now accumulate collections of chapbooks with the utmost pains. The old ballads were hawked to the poor at a penny or twopence; to-day "a really fine collection of Broadsides" will make the dealers of two continents prick up their ears. Almanacks were common enough, being things useful to everybody in the days of the Tudors. But people bought them to use them, not to stack them on shelves or stow them away in lavender, and the Bibliographical Society was performing an important service to research last year when it published a catalogue of Early English almanacks, many of them of the first rarity. So it will be with the commonest printed wares of our own generation.

Railroadiana! Yet in a century or two some of these very railroadiana may be in wide demand by classes of people who at present think railways beneath a scholar's or an artist's notice. Books about mechanical locomotion will be valued in their degree according to age, scarceness, and intrinsic interest. But it may well be that the real gems will not be books, properly so called, but literature which we see but scarcely notice on every table and on every wall. Men hang up to-day as curiosities, in the dining-rooms of old coaching inns, time-tables, yellow and quaint, giving the arrivals and departures of the York or the Exeter Mail. The proprietors of our most venerable theatres point with the greatest pride to play-bills of the eighteenth century, common printed sheets once thrust (for I suppose they did such things) under every door, and now almost as rare as primroses in December. If our odd civilisation

continues, as much will happen to the announcements and the time-tables of 1920. I can visualise entries in Sotheby's or Hodgson's catalogue of 2120:

Lot 2140: Board of Trade Regulations for the Carriage of Live-Stock by Rail Dated 1920 and signed by H. Jones, Permanent Secretary. Brilliant Impression in perfect order. This document throws a great deal of light on much-vexed questions relating to social life under George V., and some of the detail is very entertaining. Much of it relates to dogs, cats, pigs, etc., the transport of which seems to have engaged much of our ancestors' attention. To the precise determination of charges they seem to have devoted a dialectical subtlety which would do credit to Socrates. Only one other perfect copy of this most curious record is known to exist, and there is none in the British Museum.

Lot 2642: A series of six "Posters" bearing on various aspects of the war against the old Empire of Germany. No. 1—A Soldier's Cap, with inscription "If the Cap Fits Wear it"; No. 2—Picture of Britannia fighting the Dragon of Prussianism; No. 3—Rescue of British child carrying basket of food, from German by Englishman; No. 4—Picture of typical twentieth-century cottage, "Is not this worth fighting for?" etc., etc. The first two are not known to exist elsewhere.

Lot 5621: Election "Poster" dated 1918. The picture is torn across and its exact nature cannot be deduced, but the text—an appeal to the voter to return the Duke of Walton (then Mr. Lloyd George)—is intact.

These things will come up on some afternoon of 2120; but the pearl of the sale will very likely be a set of *Bradshaws* and *ABC's* covering a period of years. What a mine of information our

posterity will find those despised guides, which we regard as purely utilitarian, and throw away as soon as we think them out of date! What numbers of stations, and trains, and routes, and fares they specify! Where else will the scholar, where else the investigator of Social Development be able to look for information at once so accurate and so comprehensive concerning an important department of our lives? And where else will the antiquary, the bibliophile, the collector be able to recover so much fragrant detail, such countless suggestions of the lives that we, a quiet, jaded, picturesque, slow-going, but robust, simple and merry race of people led in an England not yet urbanised, modernised, or developed in accordance with the later conceptions of applied science? Men often lay up money or lands in order to insure the fortunes of their descendants; men have been known, trusting to their ability to scent a rising market, to stock their houses with pictures with the same object; it is reported that in America of recent months prudent men have been doing their best for their progeny by laying down cellars of wine. But I doubt if a man who is willing to take really long views and can trust his children to obey the terms of his will, could do better than lay down in dry, warm bins, not to be disturbed for two centuries, a complete file of *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*. That is what will be rare; that is what they will really appreciate and covet; that is what will fetch the money. Failing that, any non-literary relics, provided these are sufficiently common and (at present) insignificant, will do. An air-gun, a few sets of Ludo and Halma, an opera-hat, a football cap, a signed photograph of Sir Henry Irving, a few pairs of flannel trousers—a collection like that, kept in good condition, would some day be worth its weight in gold. These things would be regarded as—and perhaps they really are—the bones of history.

ON BEING SOMEBODY ELSE

I HAD recently an experience that I had not previously imagined: a journalist attributed to me a pseudonymous book that I had not written. If the book had been some very trashy novel there would have been obvious reason for annoyance. The point is that it was not a trashy book. On the contrary, it was an unusually good book of its kind; a book which has been generally praised as brilliant; a book which I have praised myself; a book full of knowledge which I do not possess and sagacious epigrams which my poor ingenuity could not have constructed. Yet I was very upset, feverishly anxious to get the canard (which means a duck) stopped. It was not modesty; I do not deceive myself there. It was not a generous desire not to be credited with powers that are not mine or to filch (which means steal) the honour rightly belonging to some other man. Much as I might wish to be thoroughly moral, I do not think I should ever get really excited, really angry, because I had been given credit that I did not deserve. Far otherwise. My immediate thought was: "Good Lord, I don't want anybody to think I wrote that!" All the great merits of the book faded away before my mind's eye. The few things I actually did dislike about it grew to gigantic size, and swarms of quite imaginary defects came into existence and buzzed around them. I felt as though I had rather anything would happen than that I should be supposed to have written that book. The eyes of the whole population (in reality superbly indifferent to the matter and ignorant of my existence) were centred on me, and their lips, to my anguish, said: "There is the author of that

mysterious book." I did not care whether I leapt up in the estimation of these millions on account of this supposititious performance. All I was aware of was a desperate anxiety to rid myself of this imputation. I felt that I hated that book worse than any book in the world. "If it had been another book!" I impatiently exclaimed; and then I paused, for the truth began (as it sometimes does begin) to dawn on me.

The question came into my head: should I have felt like this about any other book? I put it to myself concretely in detail. Suppose somebody had imputed to me the authorship of one or other of the three or four novels considered the best of our time? I had no sooner put the question than the repudiation surged up in my throat accompanied with a flood of bitterness. Or such-and-such a fine play; or So-and-So's epic; or the collected poems of somebody else, which I have so often and so enthusiastically eulogised? I began to find that the answer was the same: I should not like it. Mr. Jones is no doubt a great novelist, but I could not bear to be considered guilty of that vulgar passage on page 323. Mr. Smith's plays draw me to the theatre whenever they are staged, but I should be miserable if the public supposed me capable of his lapses in English. Mr. Green's English is undoubtedly beautiful; but has it quite the highest kind of beauty? and anyhow, would it not be intolerable to be presumed to hold his views about morality? Book after book, all as highly reputed as contemporary books could be, paraded before my mind, and instant objection was taken to all. Isolated passages might be borne with equanimity or even boasted with pride; but as wholes, no! I am glad that such works have been written, but there is not one that I should like either my friends or strangers to suppose that I had written under an assumed name. This book shows a lack of humour with which I should loathe to be saddled;

that a flippancy which I enjoy as a reader but surely could not have been guilty of as writer; to be esteemed the possessor of Mr. White's great powers of ratiocination would not compensate for the disgrace of his constant misquotations from languages which he does not understand; and how could one hold up one's head if people really deemed one capable of such heavy obtuseness as Mr. Black was guilty of at the beginning of his tenth chapter, otherwise very penetrating? Some of Mr. Pink's lyrics would be charming to own, but I should blush with shame if it were I who were thought guilty of harping so frequently on his one string. Whatever my faults, I thought, blushing, I am not such an ass as to go on doing such a thing as Pink does time after time.

The train of thought continued. I wondered if I could stomach being saddled with the whole works (for being identified with another author must mean that) of any author from the birth of recorded time. Should I find that even Homer would be too expensive at the price of his occasional nods? I tried them one after another. I have a great admiration for Lord Tennyson. *The Revenge* and others I could appropriate with pleasure, but not if I am to be deemed the nincompoop who wrote:

> What does little birdie say
> In his nest at break of day?

or the most pompous passages in *The Princess.* I should at once disclaim identity with Wordsworth, with all his greatnesses, rather than be supposed capable of committing *The Idiot Boy;* Keats's odes might be well enough, but what about some of those awful trivialities that lurk in corners of his books? I should write to the papers at once if anybody credited me with the contorted sentences of the great Carlyle, or the cynicism of the great Byron, or the humourless stiffness of the great Milton. Would I

I wondered, even be able to bear it if I were supposed the perpetrator of the gross remarks of Falstaff or the bad word-play of Launcelot Gobbo? I think not.

So colossal—for I have the consolation of being sufficiently scientific not to think my characteristics unique—is human vanity; or, more pleasantly, so obstinate is one's attachment to one's own personality. Just as we would be burdened with no man's works, unaltered, so we would exchange natures with no man. I doubt even if there is a man alive who would exchange faces with another, though most faces are, on the face of them, inferior to others. A feature or two might be borrowed perhaps: smaller ears from one man, or a straighter nose from a second, or a whiter nose from another, or a slight accession of hair from a third. But a man would not take another man's face intact: he would want to preserve his own, however modified, his own recognisable as the old one; he can stand fifty blemishes that are born with himself better than one which is proper to somebody else. And, for his intellect, taste, emotions, information, he would not for anything replace them with somebody else's. Other people may be better than he in parts, but they all have vices which he lacks, and these defects he could not bear to contract. In our own secret hearts we each and all of us feel, however poor our outward performances, and whatever the trivial and eradicable weaknesses of which we are conscious, superior to the rest of the world: or, if not superior, at least "different" with a difference that is very precious and beautiful to us, and the base of all our pride and perseverance.

How disturbing, distressing, and humiliating it is to contemplate the truth about oneself! But how consoling it is that the minds of all our neighbours, those refined men in the club, those complacent or harassed people in the Strand, contain equally strange secrets!

A COMMONPLACE BOOK

STRICKEN with the prevailing malady and too clot-brained to think, I rummaged lethargically among a box of old papers. I was on the Micawber Trail. The best conceivable thing that might turn up would be some forgotten unprinted essay which would at once save me the pain of writing when not really equal to it, and at the same time, perhaps, produce the bogus but useful impression that this hardened sermonizer had suddenly recaptured the first freshness, the spontaneity and the peach-bloom of youth. The hope was not cherished seriously, for there were no grounds for it; it was entertained merely because it was comfortable. Naturally that essay, carefully composed and precisely suited to the occasion, did not turn up. There is no such essay in that box. There is no such hidden treasure in any box of mine, and least of all would this box contain any. I did find two essays in it. One was headed, in a fair round hand with a fair thick line drawn under the title, "The Character of Oliver Cromwell," and the other, also beautifully superscribed, had for its theme the question, so captivating to the novice who has just pushed open the enchanted gates of Political Science: "Is the State an Organism?" These titles show how old was that box and how old were the papers. "I remember, I remember the house where I was born." The laburnum may still hang its clusters there, but "I'm farther off from heaven than when I was a boy," and the width of the gap was as apparent to me as it was to the poet when I noted with what high seriousness I had once reflected on the organic or inorganic complexion of the

State. As for Cromwell, my views seem to have been unsettled; but one sentence, as I read this estimate of him, came back to me like a remembered scent. It was dubiously relevant; in fact, rather blatantly dragged in by the scruff of the neck. "Some men are born pious, some achieve piety, and some have piety thrust upon them." The indirect, not so very indirect, reference was to a current controversy about compulsory Chapels; but the erudite man to whom this sentence was solemnly read aloud did not betray by any blink or quiver a consciousness of the fact. Why should such compositions have been kept, yellowing year after year, for nearly twenty years: lugged, unlooked at, from city to city and house to house, while the Free Trade election, and the Veto election, and the Franco-British Exhibition, and Signorinetta's Derby, and the Wright Brothers, and the Ulster conflict, and a five years' War came and went? There lie their stiff, creased, foolish folios for all the world as though there were still some use for them, as though their whole period of usefulness was not measured by those quarters of an hour in which they satisfied, or were taken as satisfying, a person in authority. But it is less easy to destroy old rubbish than new, and even new rubbish struggles hard for survival; and they went back into the box.

There were papers there of all sorts, letters, unreceipted bills, a picture postcard of a giantess, programmes, fixture cards, and a silk rosette on some vanished day emblematic of heaven knows what! But I came at the bottom on one of those exercise books with blue sides, down which run many little zigzag lines of crescents and thin cylinders in white and red. What on earth, I thought, with something of the emotions of an archæological digger in Egypt or Sicily who sees a bronze foot sticking up through the new soil, what on earth can this be? It might

have been a volume of adolescent verse, escaped the flames through some accident. It might have contained notes (taken down) on the constitution of Athens or (self-made) on Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*. I suppose it might have contained, were it early enough in date, cricket averages; I know it might have contained, had it been very early indeed, a translation of *Æneid* II into the metre of Macaulay's *Armada*, nicely vigorous, perhaps, for the passage in which those horrific serpents ramp over the waves to Laocoon, but not entirely suitable for the more solemn and the more touching moments.

Reluctant to exchange the liberty of the conjectural for the shackles of the real world I stood there, my fingers resting on the unopened book, racking my brain for memories of what it might have been. There came into my mind the recollection of a time when a youth, spasmodically industrious, made a practice of copying into just such books sentences which had struck him when perusing the greatest works of the greatest masters. A queer hotch-potch, remembered indistinctly, in patches. Most of the observations of Dr. Johnson were there transcribed: which should count unto that youth for righteousness. There were many *mots* from Gibbon. One of them, thus recorded in adolescence, still sticks in my mind. It is perhaps the largest exaggeration in any serious history: "A thousand swords were plunged at once into the bosom of the unfortunate Probus." Truly, an imperial death! Bacon was scoured for this repository of wit and wisdom; it contained enough Montaigne, Macaulay, Sterne, and Burton to supply the calendar makers with "thoughts for the day" for another century. Aristotle was there in some force; nor were the poets lacking. Was this volume before me one of those, once loved and long lost? Should I recover an old critical mood transfixed; would the result be a contemptuous pity for a former

rawness and solemnity or would the volume be a pool in which I should contemplate Narcissus-like features familiar if not without reservation admired? I was on the point of turning the pages when memory made one of her sudden surprising revelations. The covers of those old note-books stood clear and vivid before the inward eye; they had not been blue, they had both been shiny black, of a limp stiffness. What had been blue?

Then I thought I remembered. Yes, that was blue. The very thought of it brought to my wasted cheeks a blush of shame and guilt. It was a diary. It did not get very far, but what there was of it must have been very abominable. It was not a healthy diary saying that I had been for a walk with Jones, been given a hundred lines or observed a hoopoe or a Smith's warbler, or rejoiced over the result of the Boat Race. Introspective it was, written under the shadow of *The Sorrows of Werther*, bought second-hand, and the *Diary of Marie Bashkirtseff*, strangely encountered and unobtrusively borrowed in my last holidays. What pompous reflections on the world and genius it must have contained; what terrible symptoms of religious conflict, happily largely imaginary; and what sickening manifestations of the first conscious stirrings of a virgin heart: poses struck God knows for whom, myself or a dim posterity. If this is that diary, I thought, one swift glimpse will be enough, and it will straightway go into the flames, the flames that should have shrivelled its unwholesome body years ago. That at least, dear though the past may be and sweet the dreams of childhood, I do not wish to recover. Disgusting, morbid, hypocritical: all the apt adjectives rose to my tongue, all the more bitterly as that grim inner voice whispered, in its accustomed way, "Why so venomous? Do you think you have *really* changed?"

But I took the plunge and encountered the shock. The book was completely empty. No mark, excepting a faintly pencilled 9d. inside the front cover, defaced its whiteness. Not artistic ambition, it seems, had prompted its preservation, and not sentiment. Only thrift.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

I DO not receive many Christmas cards. This is not surprising as I never remember to send any out. The most I have ever done, when feeling most strenuous, was to scramble out a few New Year's cards to people who had sent me Christmas cards, and whose remembrance of me stirred my gratitude. But I do always get some, and I got a few this year.

I have just been looking at them all before cremating them. Those which come from the more intellectual of my friends have no longer anything peculiarly Christmas cardy about them. They are in good taste, designed by or for the senders, admirably printed, and, in point of language, ready for the scrutiny of the most fastidious critic of style. Nothing could be more refined. There are no sprigs of holly on these, no claspings of amputated hands, no squat village towers amid snowy landscapes. They have brown collotype pictures of the owners' houses, choice etchings after Rembrandt, or exquisite coloured reproductions of St. Vincent and a Donor by Melozzo da Forli in the Palazzo Doria-Pamphili at Rome. Each card of them is a silent protest against the old kind of card. As I look at them I hear them saying, "What an improvement we are! How clearly we demonstrate that Christmas greetings can be conveyed without vulgarity. What careful consideration we betray! The men and women who chose *us* really wished to send their friends something worth having." There is a beautiful woodcut on yellowish hand-made paper, with "A Happy Christmas" as only inscription. There is a page from an illuminated manuscript.

There is a card specially written out by an expert calligrapher. There is another displaying choice specimens of seventeenth-century typographical ornament. All very chaste, and not one of them (I need scarcely say) bearing a line of verse, even of good verse.

Yet from the more old-fashioned and less aspiring remnant of my acquaintance there still come a few tokens of the old Victorian sorts, freely powdered with Robin Redbreasts and mistletoe, and carrying quatrains to a card. It was one of these quatrains that checked me in the middle of my campaign of destruction and made me begin these reflections. It runs as follows:

Glad Christmas to you on this day,
Good Fortune ever find you,
Life's Sunlight be before you aye,
Its shadows all behind you.

Well, you will say, there is nothing very odd about that: it is precisely like thousands of others. Wait a moment. The odd thing is that under those verses is printed the name "Browning."

I stand open to correction. I have, I admit, not searched Robert Browning's works for this sequence of elegant sentiments. But I really cannot suppose that he wrote it. Nor can I believe that his wife wrote it. Nor can I even believe that Mr. Oscar Browning wrote it, and with him is exhausted the catalogue of the Brownings known to fame or me. There have been, no doubt, other Brownings. John Browning or Nicodemus Browning may have been the author of this composition; or George Bernard Browning, or J. Pierpont Browning, or some inglorious but not altogether mute Ella Wheeler Browning. But if Robert Browning was really the author he must certainly have had a bad off day, on which his style

was indistinguishable from that of any other Christmas card poet. And the common style of the Christmas card poets reaches the lowest known or conceivable level of banality in conception and tameness in execution.

I look through some of the other missives which have been sent to me in the hope (I must presume) of cheering me up, of inducing merriment and an optimistic outlook. Here are some of the verses on them—if I am committing breaches of copyright I must apologise:

(1)

To you and those within your home
This Christmas day may blessings come,
And may good luck, good health, good cheer
Be guests of yours for all the year.

(2)

As on Life's tide the seasons come and go
May sorrow ebb and gladness ever flow.

(3)

Milestones of olden memories
  Along sweet friendship's way;
Oh! how they brighten up the past,
  And cheer the coming day.

(4)

Greeting just to say we all unite,
In wishing you and yours a Christmas bright.

(5)

Deck out the walls with garlands gay,
And let the kindly laughter play.
List! the chimes are sweetly sounding
Xmas happiness abounding:
All that's good and true be thine
At this merry festive time.

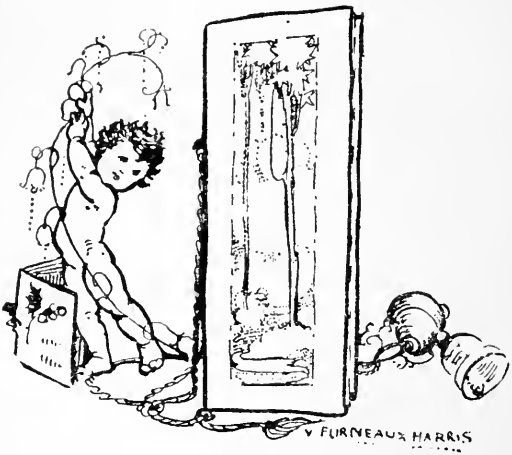
(6)

This is the time for sweet remembrance,
For thoughts of friends both old and new;
The words will not express the wishes
Sent within this card for you.

If Browning wrote one of them why not the lot? There is, I admit, a touch of *Mrs.* Browning about the rhyme of "time" and "thine" in number five, and the elaborate maritime image in number two has perhaps a touch of Swinburne. But except for these very slight local differences the whole of these, not to mention thousands of others, all that you have ever seen and all that your Aunt Maria has ever seen, might have come from one pen. It is amazing that every publisher of Christmas cards should have "on tap" a bard so skilful that he can turn out hundreds of these poems without ever introducing a touch of individuality or novelty. For somebody must write them, even if it be only the chairman of the manufacturing company or the compositor who does the type-setting. Who are these mysterious people? Are they scattered amateurs everywhere? Or is it here that we find the explanation of how our professional and justly celebrated poets earn their living? Or is this one of those industries which are the hereditary monopoly of a few families like flint-knapping, violin-making and gold-beating? Does Mr. Jones, of Putney, whose neighbours know him for one who "goes up to the City" every morning on some vague but presumably respectable business, really immure himself for eight hours per diem in an office in Chancery Lane and compose those verses which he never mentions at home, his father having left him a very valuable connection with the makers? Or—this is another solution—is it really that nobody has written any new ones for years?

Our enlightened capitalists are always said to be

exploring new methods of eliminating waste. May it not be that it long ago occurred to one of them that a sufficient accumulation of Christmas verses was now in existence, that there was no difference between old ones and new ones, that nobody could even remember if he had seen one of them before, and that it was criminally extravagant to go on employing labour in the fabrication of a constant supply of new goods before the old were worn out? Surely if these truths were not grasped by keen business minds in the old days of fat and plenty they must have occurred to somebody during the war when every ounce of effort had to be put into war-work, and he who mis-employed labour was helping the Germans. If not, are we to understand that the composers of Christmas verses, after five years' inactivity, have actually been set to work again at their own trade—or (awful thought) that some of those extraordinary tribunals exempted them as indispensable?



FAME AFTER DEATH

I HAVE been reading an author unduly neglected. There are many. Our literature is full of minor classics which from time to time are galvanised into life by new editions, and then relapse into almost complete oblivion, a few bookish people cherishing them and no one else mentioning them. These resent the neglect. They feel that injustice is being done if a favourite book is omitted from histories of literature or is unknown to people who would appreciate it. And there is no doubt that the injustice is felt as an injustice to the author personally, though he be long dead and unaware of men's speech and their silence. This feeling springs unconsciously, perhaps, from the knowledge that if a man writes a good book one of his main motives, almost always, is posthumous fame. He wishes his name and his personality to survive him; posterity must think well of him; it must know that a man lived who was fully up to its own best standards, a man intellectually as acute, emotionally as quick, morally as sound as the latest births of time. "I think," said the dying Keats, "that I shall be among the English poets after I die"; "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes," wrote Shakespeare, "shall outlast this powerful rhyme." The predictions indicate the prepossessions. We still see through their eyes and feel with their hearts, find ourselves in them and them in ourselves. But posthumous fame is not always of this quality; and the neglect we spoke of is not the only kind of neglect.

For, thinking of those authors whose names are kept

but dimly and intermittently alive, of those books (not of the first order) in the survival or revival of which chance seems so notably to operate, I thought of those whose names survive detached from their works, or of whom the names are universally respected whilst the works are generally ignored. There are Anglo-Saxon poets, Caedmon and Cynewulf, whose names come easy to the lips of all literate men; but who reads them save an occasional editor and an infrequent examinee? Langland, of *Piers Plowman*, is another such. He is universally regarded as our greatest writer before Chaucer, but how many times a year does anybody open his book, and how many of those who would never omit him from any list of the illustrious dead, are in contact with him or have any first-hand basis for their belief in his greatness? Writing of Chaucer's successors, the late Churton Collins, a candid if a narrow man, remarked that "What Voltaire said of Dante is literally true of such poets as Henryson, Douglas and Dunbar. We simply take them on trust." And there are a great many others whom most of us take on trust. It would be foolish to suggest that no one ever reads the *Faerie Queen* through, and we know that from time to time Spenser, the great artist, has profoundly affected the art of his successors. But what proportion of those who put him amongst the four greatest of our poets habitually read his masterpiece, or, in fact, have ever read it at all? How many who mechanically do reverence to his name are secretly of opinion that his works are extremely dull? Is he read in England any more than Confucius is? And in some degree does not this divorce between fame and familiarity, the existence of established and unchallenged reputation which is also mainly untested, affect also such great figures as Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Dryden, and such lesser ones as Richardson and Jeremy Taylor? They are labelled; they have, after

whatever early vicissitudes, been put on their respective shelves, and scholars provide the general public with the facts about them and the justifications for their position. But Spenser does not live as Shelley lives, nor as Dryden and Jane Austen. The range of their personal access is far narrower than that of their celebrity. In the farthest extremity, there survive from classical times illustrious names to which no works are attached at all; they are spoken of with respect; they must not be missed out on any account, but we know nothing of the men beyond their names. And this, which is an uncommon occurrence in the sphere of literature, is in other spheres common; for our dim and inchoate early records have handed down to us the names of thousands of monarchs and warriors who meant to leave their marks on the world, whose names do reverberate through the ages, and of whom we know nothing more. What was Sennacherib like? What, beyond their names, did Hengist and Horsa leave behind them? And, dreaming of that posthumous life which is so usual a human ambition, would they have been satisfied to know that they would survive only in a mere verbal repetition of the names they bore?

Probably they would have preferred that to nothing. This passion is beyond reason. Reason tells us that time is long and eternity longer, that all civilisations pass, and that in the end all records fade. We cannot, looking ahead, visualise millions of years of accumulated reputations. Old fames must die as new fames grow, and accident may wipe them out with more than normal rapidity. "What poets sang in Atlantis?" asks a modern poet. We know what they must have felt, but we do not know who they were; and the tidal wave that suddenly submerged that fabled continent is but a violent and abrupt symbol of the decay and oblivion that ultimately must overcome all the works of men. We may be established

as we think. We may at last have driven firm piles in that morass into which past civilisations have constantly relapsed. The last of the barbarian invasions may be over; our scientific fabric may not, within thinkable time, collapse; the ordered progress of the Victorian vision may be ahead and may last through aeons. But even so—and it is a large postulate—the vessel's wake cannot indefinitely be kept in sight. There will be a horizon to each age, beyond which the knowledge and interest of details far behind will fade. They will have new Shakespeares and new Spensers; our sonnets will have gone like our marble and the gilded monuments of our princes, beyond the range even of archaeologists. And in the end what prospect does reason, working on the supposed facts that are now provided her, offer? A cooling and a disappearance. A void and frozen world circling in space, and a watching moon that has outlasted all mortal fames and seen the ultimate Shakespeare pass and die, leaving no more permanent trace than Hodge at his plough or the slaves that worked on the pyramids. We know all that, yet knowing it makes no difference. For fame after death, however uncertain and however perishable, men will work, starve, and bear with cheerfulness the neglect of their contemporaries; in the last resort they are content that for some term, the limits of which they shrink from contemplating, the mere syllables of their names shall be known and spoken, like the names of schoolboys cut on desks or the initials of lovers on trees. Is it strange that the meditative, contemplating so peculiar a phenomenon, should have found in this mania, otherwise so stupid and perverse, the inexplicable reflection of a deep consciousness of immortality?

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184. The Book of Snobs
192. The Great Hoggarty Diamond
198. Paris Sketch Book
205. The Irish Sketch Book
207. Roundabout Papers
227. Novels by Eminent Hands

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79. Barchester Towers

TWAIN, MARK
252. The Innocents Abroad

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282. Tono-Bungay
284. Kipps

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10. East Lynne
16. The Channings
26. Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles
30. Danesbury House
51. Verner's Pride
210. Lord Oakburn's Daughters
253. Roland Yorke
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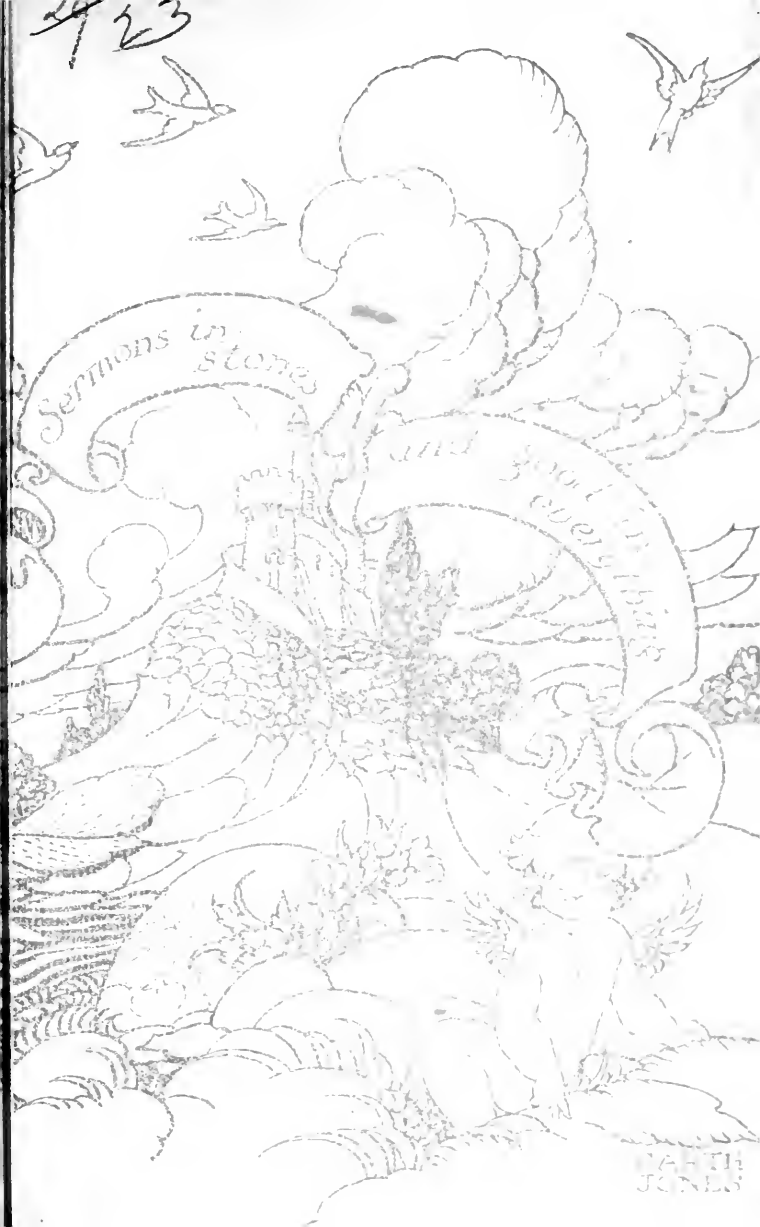
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